

"I KNOW NOT WHAT TO DO": RICHARDSON'S
PROBLEMS WITH CLOSURE IN CLARISSA

By

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by

Janet Morgan Fisher

For my husband, Alton, who believed in me even
when I did not.

For my daughters, Amy and Stephanie, who
shared with me their joy, beauty,
wonder, and reality.

For my family, especially Mother, who
encouraged me when I needed
inspiration.

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Clarissa's death has consistently jarred on the nerves of readers since Richardson first began to circulate his unfinished manuscript. Nevertheless, few readers have admitted to being happier with another ending. As Richardson realized, if he married Clarissa to Lovelace, he would achieve little more than he did in Pamela. Convin-
vincingly, Richardson eliminates every secular recourse for Clarissa. She can neither assume her estate nor liti-
gate with her family or Lovelace. Death is her only refuge.

Richardson's unprecedented attempts to close his novel, to limit possible interpretations, and to lead his readers both to accept Clarissa's death and to applaud it as a triumph have resulted in a continued sense of dis-
quiet among readers. The Christian framework with its doctrine of future rewards fails to offer a comfortable solution even to professed Christians. Eighteenth-century

readers were conversant with scriptural teachings on the afterlife with God, and, intellectually at least, still embraced the notion that providence directs individual lives. On the other hand, the shifting world view of the eighteenth century was attempting an accommodation between the essentially incompatible ideas that man is under God's perpetual guidance and that man, through his own will, molds his destiny.

Clarissa is caught in the moment of transition. Through her, Richardson unwittingly articulates the dilemma involved in attempting to form an alliance between disparate world views. Richardson faithfully mirrors his active, changing eighteenth-century middle class world. In doing so, he images the difficulties inherent in proffering spiritual solutions to temporal problems. Clarissa can find no solution which satisfies temporal and spiritual demands. Richardson has her opt to fulfill spiritual needs. His readers, however, can only minimally accept his resolution so informed were they, and are they still, by a shifting world view. Richardson captures man's attempts to redefine his dual role as his own creator and as God's vassal.

CHAPTER I
ARRESTED EXPECTATION: THE FUNCTION OF CLOSURE

But yet, if we would speak of Things as they are, we must allow, that all the Art of Rhetorick, besides Order and Clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong Ideas, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat. . . .

--John Locke (Essay Concerning
Human Understanding, III, x,
508)

In Sophocles's Antigone, King Creon presumes to set his own laws above those of the gods and, by doing so, brings about the deaths of Antigone, his son, and his wife. Throughout the play, Creon is compared to God and found wanting. Antigone bluntly proclaims, "I did not think your edicts strong enough/To overrule the unwritten laws/Of God and heaven, you being only a man."¹ At the same time, we find in this play one of the most famous passages in Greek literature--a passage which celebrates man even so far as to declare: "Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these is man/There is nothing beyond his power."²

Any history of Western thought must surely include an account of Western man's constant vacillation between

the celebration of his own wisdom, ingenuity, and potential for good and the subjugation of himself as a weak and fallible creature before a Supreme Being who epitomizes power and knowledge. At the same time, it is perhaps accurate to say that, in general, throughout the middle ages, primarily as a result of the belief in Christian doctrine, the abstract ideal of the spiritual world of man (God's glory) and the immediate concreteness of his secular world (man's glory) were simply different forms of expression for the same ultimate reality. Spiritual man and secular man were not only equally real but were quite literally two complementary aspects of the same being. Even after the middle ages, until the end of the seventeenth century in fact, despite repeated and often successful attacks upon Church doctrine, the ability of the human spirit to maintain its sense of worth was contingent upon its relationship with an immanent divinity. But by the eighteenth century, the all-encompassing deity who continually intervenes in even the most mundane aspects of daily existence was becoming a more distant deity, and the vacillation evident in Sophocles' tragedy begins once more to emerge.

Once the concept of God as the sustaining power begins to fade, man finds himself suddenly alone, forced to create for himself his own sense of continuity and meaning for existence. Certainly, the shift from spiritual man to

secular man was not abrupt. As with all other major alterations in the thought patterns of man, the most we can identify is the fact of transition, but not any particular moment. It is evident, for example, that sometime between the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century Church doctrine is displaced by man's own definition of the virtuous life, that man begins to examine his own psychological and societal needs in order to determine for himself how he should behave, where his duty lies. If we examine any particular literary work during this transition, however, we are faced not with a dramatic alteration of thought, but rather with a sense of vacillation and tentativeness. As Melvyn New suggests in a brief discussion of Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, by the mid-eighteenth century we have reached a point at which

fiction can only be understood as the reflection of that moment in Western thought when the antithetical ideas of man as God's creature and man as the radical product of his own autonomous will came together in uneasy and temporary alliance.³

If, indeed, Richardson does reach the point of projecting disparate views simultaneously, by the nineteenth century, we find such writers as George Eliot seeking to construct a fiction which eliminates altogether the concept of "man as God's creature." This effort has, of course, continued into the twentieth century, leading an author like André Gide to wonder:

But cannot man learn to demand of himself, through virtue, what he believes demanded by God? . . . That strange game that we are playing on earth (unintentionally, unconsciously, and often unwillingly) will be won only if the idea of God, on withdrawing, yields to virtue, only if man's virtue, his dignity, supplants God. God has ceased to exist save by virtue of man. . . . But I shall already have accomplished much if I remove God from the altar and put man in his place. Provisionally I shall think that virtue is the best the individual can obtain from himself.⁴

Gide speaks for the modern attitude, for the transition now made, when he insists that man must "get along without God. . . . I mean: get along without the idea of God, without a belief in an attentive, tutelary, and retributive Providence. . . ." ⁵

Faced with the philosophical problem of the Christian world view being displaced by a secular world view, writers discovered a corresponding dilemma with the form of their fiction. A Christian superstructure provided a set of mythical certainties, of meanings and interpretations which an author knew very well would be understood by his readers without further explication by himself. In fact, since the author's purpose was generally didactic (a purpose largely defined by writing in a Christian society), his narrative had imposed upon it specific, deliberate meanings. As long as the meaning of a narrative was considered predetermined, the focus of fiction tended to be essentially narrative, depending on plot,

adventure, and resolution. But with the movement away from a reliance on any one form of received wisdom, the author was free to create his own source of meaning--even if not free from didactic purpose. He could, as Erich Kahler suggests, create "the whole compass of his work out of himself," rather than simply supply the "incidental ornament, the embroidery" about a central core of indisputable signification.⁶ Now, perhaps for the first time since Greek tragedy, there were no "unwritten unalterable laws" instituted by an omnipotent God that a being who is "only a man" must not and cannot overrule.

If, however, meaning is not imposed from without, where is the author to look but within man himself? And how can the author define meaning without examining the mind of man, the new source of meaning? Heretofore, the mind of man had been of secondary significance; of primary importance, the duty, that is, the actions, of man, the whole of which might have been summarized as "to fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Gradually, an increasingly intense exploration of character and personality is evident in fictional narratives. Authors learn to study the mind of man in order to determine what man is capable of, what his nature is, what he aspires to, and they do so without reference to any supernatural system to define capacities or aspirations. And this shift in emphasis brings with it other problems concerning

the form of fiction. If there is no longer a universally accepted world view and, therefore, a received and accepted meaning of life, if what man must believe and how he must behave are no longer indisputably recognized by author and reader alike, is there, indeed, any possibility of meaning--any possibility of didactic purpose? Can an author continue to make statements that can be understood by his audience in the way in which he wants them to be understood?

A number of modern critics have addressed this question, and some (notably structuralists) have determined with Roland Barthes that in fiction there is no "subject"; subject is, in fact, only "an illusory notion."⁷ An author does not provide the subject; rather, the reader does. In the process of assimilating what he has read, the reader gives the work of fiction "a center, a principle, a content."⁸ In a now famous discussion of the form of fiction, Barthes declares that "we can no longer see a text as a binary structure of Content and Form . . . the text in its entirety is only a multiplicity of forms without a content."⁹ This seems to be very close to saying that an author does not write because he has something to say, something to communicate to others. Instead, the author writes, if Barthes is correct, because he envisions a structure that he would like to create even though he has no good reason for creating it. Such a concept appears

to be very like suggesting that an architect designs a building because he likes a particular form, but cannot himself conceive of a possible use for such a structure.

Perhaps the most serious objection to Barthes' suggestion is that it is contrary to human nature. While we must concede that fiction in general no longer exists primarily "to verify or convert to an accepted system,"¹⁰ we must also recognize that all fiction results from a quest for intelligibility. As Melvyn New has argued, it is the most human of all traits to attempt to organize the fragments of life into an identifiable and acceptable totality. "In short, the problem," says New, "is one of consciousness itself, laboring to secure its relationship to the fragments that surround it. The literary work . . . is one such fragment; the insistence with which we feel the need to understand that work, in actuality to master and subdue it, is the human need to incorporate all fragments into an imagined whole." And the author writes in an effort "to fit the fragments into a whole form, whether in defense or repair of a received form, or an attack upon it, or in search of a new one. . . ."¹¹ The only possibility that does not seem probable is that man can shatter into fragments the system by which he lives and be content to leave the fragments where they lie. In considering atheism, Gide comments on its effort to free man from the Christian system and perhaps from all systems only to

become formulated itself into another intelligible system for ordering the world of man: "There is not a single exalting and emancipatory influence that does not in turn become inhibitory."¹² Man never rejects guiding principles altogether; he merely changes from one set to another. To identify a set of guiding principles is the aim of every author when he picks up his pen and of every reader when he approaches any form of written communication.

If man is, then, a compulsive organizer, how has this compulsion affected the form of his fiction since the demise of the Christian myth with its careful and thorough ordering of all aspects of human existence? Generally, I would argue that modern authors have striven just as diligently as did earlier writers to write in a manner that would enable their readers to understand the thoughts that they want to convey. To be sure, their texts have at times been more resistant to understanding because author and reader are no longer operating within the same world view. Consequently, some of these modern texts seem open to a greater plurality of valid interpretations than earlier texts, though one can hardly find more willingness to pursue plurality than in readings of Hamlet, or, for that matter, Antigone. But few if any texts can be said to be entirely "open"; there are always sufficient clues in any good work of fiction to limit the possibilities of meaning.

In an essay on "Narrative and History," J. Hillis Miller writes: "The formal structure of a novel is usually conceived of as the gradual emergence of its meaning . . . the fulfillment of the teleology of the work."¹³ Miller's statement is more convincing than his attempt to argue against it in favor of "artistic form as inorganic, acentered, and discontinuous." In Middlemarch, George Eliot rejects the idea of history as a continuous progression in time, preferring, according to Miller, to postulate a concept of the historical past at the mercy of present interpretation.¹⁴ In such a view, history loses its usefulness as a source of origins; no longer can we trace a point in history from its relation to any point preceding it or as a glance toward any point succeeding it. Unfortunately, however, such a notion tends to remove certain interpretive options while it opens others to us. Miller admits that "it is no accident that Middlemarch has been so consistently misread as affirming the metaphysical system of history it in fact so elaborately deconstructs."¹⁵ But must we discard the insights into the work provided by all these supposed misreadings and accept that the single effort of the novel is to reject the idea of historical progression in favor of discontinuity, which, in effect, isolates each historical moment from all others? This approach seems to limit our options more severely still.

While it is true that we value only works that are, as Frank Kermode says, "complex and indeterminate enough to allow us our necessary pluralities,"¹⁶ we still feel compelled to set limits on the interpretations we will entertain. Perhaps we are willing to accept any explication of a text that accords well with our own world view. It is always difficult to reject ideas which tend to reflect our own philosophical leanings. Or perhaps, being more historically inclined, we prefer a hermeneutic method, which "seeks a recovery of original meanings."¹⁷ Howsoever the reader determines which interpretations he will accept and which reject, the fact remains that he will attempt to establish some interpretation as his own, will accept other interpretations as they approach his own, and will reject those irreconcilable to his own. Again, I would argue that this is a compelling human process.

In her discussion of poetic closure, Barbara Smith insists that "there is no formal principle [rhyme, meter, and the like] which in itself can prevent a poem from continuing indefinitely."¹⁸ A poem as a structure is not in itself a closed system. The same is true of a novel. When we consider closure in a novel, or in any literary work, we are not concerned with identifying "a quality of finality or conclusiveness."¹⁹ We do not, for example, insist that all the loose ends of the work be tied up, that all the questions which it raises be definitively

answered in the work, that the author say all that can be said on the subject encompassed by his text. What we are concerned with is the expectation of and desire for closure. But if a literary form does not by definition, by inherent principle, demand an end, and if we are not as authors or readers seeking a sense of finality or conclusiveness, what kind of closure do we expect in any literature? Obviously, our desire is simply for a sense of completeness. As Smith observes, as readers "we create or seek out enclosures: structures that are highly organized, separated as if by an implicit frame from a background of relative disorder or randomness, and integral or complete." Since it is in the nature of the human mind to organize whatever it must deal with and since a novel is the product, and for the consumption, of the human mind, then any novel which we are likely to take seriously must be "closed" to a greater or less degree both by the mind which creates it and by the mind which reads it. Quite simply, a structure appears to be "closed" if an individual, employing explanations from any intellectual system which he deems satisfactory or intelligible, experiences that structure as a coherent, stable, complete entity.²⁰

In considering the possibilities for "openness" or "closedness" in a novel, we must also examine the reading process itself. What does the reader expect from the author, and to what extent and in what ways does the author

accommodate the reader in these expectations? In his study, The Sense of an Ending, Kermode suggests that "no novel can avoid being in some sense what Aristotle calls 'a completed action.' This being so, all novels imitate a world of potentiality. . . . They have a fixation on the eidetic imagery of beginning, middle, and end, potency and cause."²¹ Because it is a finite structure, a novel begins, follows some pattern of development or progression, and finally ends--perhaps predictably, perhaps not. Nor does it matter whether the ending is that which the reader anticipates. Some ending is, we assume, inevitable, and, in fact, is so important that much of the reader's motivation for continuing the reading process is to discover the final resolution the author offers. And often the reader's criticism of a work depends primarily upon his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the final disposition of the story or the character whom he has followed. So significant is this element of fiction that Kermode, in his discussion of "Novel and Narrative," states:

One of the most powerful of the local and provincial restrictions is that a novel must end, or pretend to; or score a point, by disappointing the expectation that it will do so. There must be closure or at least an allusion to it. The tabu [giving away the conclusion of a work] sacralises closure; it suggests that to give away the solution that comes at the end is to give away all, so intense is the hermeneutic specialisation.²²

Order must be present in any novel and closure is what creates that sense of order. But this is not to say that the novelist is the slave of the reader, that the author must satisfy the reader's demands or suffer an ignominious fate. Indeed not. An ending occurs when, as Smith says, the author manages to "arrest the reader's expectation of further development."²³ Furthermore, "effective closure will always involve the reader's expectations regarding the termination of a sequence--even though it will never be simply a matter of fulfilling them."²⁴ In fact, since the reader expects the imitation of the reality he recognizes in a novel and since reality, at least modern reality, is often incomplete, disordered, and contradictory, the novelist has to be suspicious of establishing patterns that are too neat, too inclusive, too conclusive. Such completeness, however, was far more possible when the shared reality of reader and author recognized the ultimate unreality of a world of accident and chance, disorder, and disunity when measured against the real world of God's final ordering and sustaining hand. The real nature of this world must be emphasized--one would have to argue again the meaning of religious faith and belief to deny its reality. Since the first rumblings of distress, of disbelief, since the beginning of the sense that Christian responses to the needs and yearnings of individual men had become often inadequate or naive at

best and insensitive or dangerous at worst, perceptive authors have been aware of and have mirrored the sense of a very real dissonance in society; and perceptive readers have steadfastly looked askance at fictional endings which neatly tie up the threads of life into the proverbial little bundle--even if the bundle is a secular rather than a Christian one. Indeed, the serious reader frequently feels dissatisfied when a narrative moves unswervingly toward an expected end. Modern man tends to feel that such could happen only in fiction and is, therefore, unacceptable in fiction that purports to imitate reality. As Frank Kermode suggests, the reader respects "the falsification of one's expectation of the end":

Now peripeteia depends on our confidence of the end; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected and instructive route. . . . The more daring the peripeteia, the more we may feel that the work respects our sense of reality; and the more certainly we shall feel that the fiction under consideration is one of those which, by upsetting the ordinary balance of our naive expectations, is finding something out for us, something real. . . . It is a way of finding something out that we should, on our more conventional way to the end, have closed our eyes to. Obviously it could not work if there were not a certain rigidity in the set of our expectations.²⁵

The history of the novel is one of systems of thought, world views, reinforced, modified, or rejected. Which of

these possibilities specifically emerges in any given novel depends upon the manner in which the author closes his work. But students of the genre are continually made aware that novels present to us not static states in man's efforts to create order out of the chaos of existence (the province of romance--or of sculpture), but the passage from one state to the next in his quest for a guiding, ordering principle of existence. Furthermore, a study of the history of the novel makes us acutely aware of the disparity between the reality of our secular lives and the systems of received wisdom which we try to superimpose upon that reality. Tensions are found in the author and in the reader, as well as in the text of the novel. Even when the resolution of a work is perfectly reasonable and in keeping with all other elements of the work, the reader may still find himself dissatisfied if he is unable to accept that resolution as the most logical, most acceptable, disposition of the situation as he has incorporated it into his own system of reality. That is to say, acceptance is possible only if the ordering principle of the novel, the world view which is expressed in it, adequately organizes the reality that the reader perceives not only in the fiction with which he has been presented but as well in life as he has experienced it.

In order to study the problem of closure in the eighteenth century novel, I have chosen to examine Richardson's Clarissa (1748), a work in which the fabric of narrative is stretched tightly across the framework of a rigid external pattern. By bringing into conflict with this external pattern, a heroine who urgently desires to conform to it, but who is equally oppressed by it, Richardson struggles to validate his pattern for himself, and equally important, for his readers. His success or failure in this pursuit is less important than the struggle itself--a struggle that mirrors the eighteenth century's quest to maintain the Christian's belief in cosmic order in the face of increasing challenge and contradiction. That many contemporary readers cannot read Clarissa with any sense of satisfaction, or completeness, or rightness, that the final disposition of the heroine jars on the nerves, would be of no surprise to Richardson. That dissatisfaction is the very core of meaning of Richardson's novel.

Samuel Richardson published Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady in three installments from November, 1747, to December 6, 1748. Clarissa is a young woman who voluntarily conforms, as fully as she knows how, to the attitudes and ideals of the Christian ethic. She is chaste, generous with her time, attention, and money, orderly as well as self-disciplined, respectful of and

obedient to all those to whom a Christian woman owes respect and obedience. She is properly serious, but not somber. She, in fact, seems successfully to avoid the Seven Deadly Sins (although there is some debate about her relationship with Pride) and most of the minor ones. Furthermore, Clarissa conforms to the attitudes, conventions, and ideals of her society. She exhibits all the traits that the world admires. More than adequately accomplished in singing, dancing, playing the piano, embroidery, household management, hospitality, and so forth, she is the exemplary pattern of an eighteenth-century maiden in her particular station and rank in life. Moreover, Richardson makes it clear that even those who find themselves in other stations of life can learn a great deal from Clarissa and can profitably adopt those traits of hers which would suit and benefit their positions. It is interesting to note that Richardson makes as much of her compliance with social (that is, secular) convention as he does of her conformity to Christian ethics. Indeed, the two sets of rules appear to be equally important and even inseparable. Any one of her virtues can be traced to both spiritual and temporal authority--evidence of the "temporary alliance" of which New speaks between two different ordering principles which may share a sense of value for the same virtues but which do so for quite different reasons.

And herein lies a major problem with the closure in Clarissa. If Richardson had, as Brian Downs points out that he did not, stuck to a sermon on "the Kingdom of God is within you,"²⁶ then the novelist could have probably validated both systems (the secular and the Christian) that he seems to want to hold equally important. However, to have done so, Clarissa would have had to stay alive or would have had to die in a different manner and probably from more practical causes. On the other hand, by endorsing instead the "doctrine of future rewards," Richardson sets up a conflict between the two world views that he is trying to accommodate, for the secular world view does not and never could offer future, or afterlife, rewards. And Richardson clearly rejects any kind of reward that the secular world can offer as entirely inappropriate under Clarissa's circumstances. The secular world view Richardson allows to fend for itself in the novel, apparently because his audience is not likely to take exception to it and because he seems to have no essential quarrel with it. But the Christian world view must be defended; the audience must be convinced of its authenticity. Thus, most of Richardson's efforts at closure are related to his attempt to reinforce or bolster the received Christian superstructure, a world view which he seems to realize his audience no longer held to be infallible or wholly adequate to deal with the human

situation. Their doubts do not seem to be his doubts, but, more important, they do seem to be his authorial problem; the conflict in Clarissa is between religious faith confronting religious doubt, a conflict found both in the text and in the reader.

Had Richardson been writing in the Middle Ages, there would be no conflict between earthly values and social considerations. Dying a saint would have a clear social meaning. But Richardson faithfully images his own society in Clarissa; hence, the social construct he creates is not reconciled to the Christian world view, just as in his age there was growing divergence rather than convergence between the two. His audience, which includes us, is unable to bring these two worlds together because the City of Man can no longer be understood by reference to the City of God; it has become an independent entity, self-created, self-justified, and self-sustained.

Richardson's problem, of course, was, as Cynthia Wolff puts it, "adapting a religious, spiritually oriented notion of morality to the needs of a secular society."²⁷ To do that, he often requires that the individual define virtue in terms of social utility. But when, ultimately, he gives virtue a social definition and then allows Clarissa to transcend earthly values and social considerations, defining herself in terms of sainthood instead of in terms of humanity, the reader tends to feel a sense of

dissonance. Indeed, if virtue is meant only to effect a union between God and man, then Clarissa's death is wholly acceptable. But if virtue somehow pertains to the relationship of man to man, a problem exists if virtue, as in Clarissa's case, separates the individual from society. From a secular point of view, which must be considered both because Richardson makes it a part of the framework of his novel and because his secular readers would have done so even if he had not, it seems improbable that virtue, secularly defined by Richardson as the good that one works in the lives of others, can be operative for Clarissa only in death.

Richardson's peculiar position early in a period of transition necessitates a concern for both the Christian system that had not yet been replaced and for the secular system that had not yet replaced it. A look at the next century suggests how impossible it would have been for Richardson to evade the problem unless he confined his narratives to tracts, romance, or indisputable allegory. In her effort to deal with her historical milieu, for instance, George Eliot moves even further away from a religious and even closer toward a purely social definition of virtue in Middlemarch, published in installments from December 1871 through December 1872. Eliot's Dorothea operates almost wholly within a secular world view that seems to be built around an ethic quite close to Gide's

idea of man's demanding of himself, through virtue, what he at one time believed was demanded of him by God. But Eliot does not actually repudiate traditional Christianity. Instead, she radically changes it, and, in effect, faces the problem of how to elevate man to replace God. The stories that are interwoven with Dorothea's in Middlemarch are different versions of her basic problem--the struggle to fulfill humanly defined aspirations. The characters are repeatedly asking, "What can I do with my life?"--a superfluous question in the medieval world of a manipulative, retributive Providence. Eliot's characters do not face, as do Richardson's, the problem of how to function within the established faith and order of an inherited, received system; instead, they are expected to create from within themselves a personal faith and order to form and to measure their lives.

This is not to suggest, however, that Eliot offers no guidance. On the contrary, if anything, Eliot closes her work so carefully that we are faced with fewer moral ambiguities than in Richardson's work. In the first place, while virtue and life are not, finally, compatible in Richardson's fiction, Eliot insists they must be reconciled. One must live, in fact. The question is never whether to live, but how to live. Nor do the characters face a world of external chaos in spite of which they must fashion internal order, or at least a semblance of it,

any more than do Richardson's characters. As in Richardson's fiction, Eliot's external, social world is very carefully structured. But unlike Richardson, Eliot cannot assume or expect a significant proportion of her readers to assume that the social structure is in any way mandated by God. What the character must do is discover where he fits in, what role he must play. No longer is he taught that God created him to fill the particular niche in life that he finds himself filling. Heredity, family name, money, the social order, not God, impose upon him the restrictions with which he must cope.

Eliot seems to agree with Dr. Johnson that "we all know our own state, if we could be induced to consider it. . . ." ²⁸ Reality exists; order exists. But for Eliot, if a man cannot discern reality and order, it is because he is enveloping himself in a cloud of illusion--as does Dorothea. She fatally misreads her place in the social order. Eliot knows that man longs to escape from being his own foundation. Because God is no longer available, Dorothea tries to use Casaubon as a center. Interestingly, however, she endows Casaubon, erroneously as it happens, with Godlike, or at least Christ-like, attributes. She believes she can provide the apostleship Casaubon needs in his search for the "key to all mythologies," just as the chosen twelve provided the apostleship Jesus needed in his efforts to disseminate his gospel. She desires to

sit at his feet as Mary Magdalene sat at the feet of Jesus, and to learn from the master. Because Clarissa's world still offers God, though in a less potent condition than earlier centuries offered Him to be sure, she can mediate, order, give meaning to her existence, directly through Him. Thus, she never feels compelled to submit her intellect to the direction or mastery of any human being. Consequently, when Clarissa perceives that she cannot conform to the role she believes she must play, cannot maintain the wholeness of her world view if she allows her family, her suitors, or Lovelace to impose a sense of fragmentariness on it, she rejects mediation through man in favor of mediation directly through God.

While Richardson must find a way to reconcile the Christian and secular world views in order to accommodate the ambivalence he found in himself and in his audience, Eliot must find a way to replace the Christian world view altogether since neither she nor her audience would accept it as the central ordering principle of existence. Interestingly, Eliot's secular world view is predictably similar to Christianity. God is replaced by Knowledge. And Christ, the mediator, is replaced by Man. But historically, the importance of both Richardson's eighteenth-century and Eliot's nineteenth-century methods of dealing with transitional world views is that both seek to achieve a sense of relief from the "unintelligible weight" of the "stupendous

fragmentariness" of life. The extent to which a reader shares this sense of relief is one measure of the authors' achievement. However, because the effect of each heroine's final disposition seems to many of us "incalculably diffusive," as Eliot's narrator suggests, rather than clearly defined and accepted by us or by the heroines, we are in the presence of problematic rather than testamentary fiction, the possibility of completeness without conclusiveness, questions without answers.

The problem is that while Richardson insists upon imposing a spiritual solution within his carefully imitated social world, Eliot insists upon a social solution (marriage) to an intellectual problem--one which, at least by analogy, might be considered a spiritual problem. And while Richardson fails at conclusiveness because religion and society are on divergent paths by the middle of the eighteenth century, so Eliot also fails at conclusiveness because her social system (and perhaps all nineteenth-century social systems) does not allow the human being to fulfill himself or the reader's expectations when measured by past sureties, but, on the contrary, simply opens up further potentialities and possibilities. Each work, then, is not "complete" insofar as the inconclusiveness is inherent in the problem set forth throughout the entire fiction. Indeed, Middlemarch points directly to the failure of Western man to replace Christianity with

something of equal capacity to satisfy man's hunger for an order which fully validates his existence--and in so doing, establishes the fundamental form of the modern novel: a work in which the reality of unstructured life always exhausts the author's or the reader's efforts to impose a pattern upon it.

To suggest that Richardson and Eliot should not have tried to close their novels, should not have tried to present a coherent ordering principle of the universe, is to suggest that they should have tried the impossible. To criticize the failure of their attempts at conclusiveness is simply to recognize the inevitable in a period of transition in the thought and beliefs of man. Until Yeats' rough beast is born anew in Bethlehem, we can expect nothing else from our fiction but to mirror faithfully man's inability to satisfy himself in a secular world; in Richardson we have an author who has shown us how brilliantly and beautifully that inability, especially as it is recognized in the early stages of a transition, can be recreated by literature.

Notes

¹Sophocles, Antigone, in Great Plays: Sophocles to Albee, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield and Robert C. Elliott, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, 1975), p. 17.

²Sophocles, pp. 14-15.

³Melvyn New, "The Grease of God": The Form of Eighteenth-Century Fiction," PMLA, 91 (1976), 241. In an earlier study of Tristram Shandy, New deals at length with fictive efforts to accommodate divergent ideas of the relationship of moral man, spiritual man, and religious man. Sterne's orthodoxy, New insists, affirms the attitude of those, like Swift, who argue that man must couple reason with faith to achieve a greater refinement of morality in his life. "This fast union of morality and religion is one of the marks of Latitudinarian Anglicanism which distinguishes it from the deistic assumption of moral conduct as a possibility quite distinct from religion." As the eighteenth-century progresses, we become aware of the prevalence of the debate, reflecting all the more a state of transition rather than a momentary exercise of rhetoric among intellectuals and clerics. Hobbes focused on man's nature instead of on God's, thereby contributing to the secularization of the question of benevolence. Later philosophers who asserted a "benevolence based on man" rather than on God evoked heated opposition. Pope and Shaftesbury, for instance, reject the idea of moral sense as essentially a function of reason rather than an immediate and intuitive response of the instincts, passions, and reasoning process combined. Melvyn New, Laurence Sterne as Satirist: A Reading of "Tristram Shandy" (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida, 1969), pp. 15, 37-39.

⁴André Gide, The Journals of André Gide, trans. and ed. Justin O'Brien, 2 (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 350. Gide posits the idea but stops short of even being sure that it is achievable. Indeed, he admits that "we have not yet reached this point"; moreover, some "will probably see in it nothing but an invitation to license." With all man's attempts to take responsibility for himself, there is little evidence to suggest he can or will do so.

⁵Gide, 352.

⁶Erich Kahler, The Inward Turn of Narrative, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 57-58. Of course, Kahler habitually forces his assertions to an extreme that we must beware. Thus, while he makes an accurate and valid point, we need to reject as inaccurate his further claim that "Dante's symbolic procedure consists in fitting the variegated patterns of life on this earth to the preexistent divine cosmos, in deriving earthly life from and leading it to that cosmos. But to the creators of the new symbolism [that is, since Cervantes] there is no preexistence, no premise outside the work itself." Literature derives from the accumulation of the authors' experiences; we rarely invent, only assimilate and develop.

⁷Roland Barthes, "Style and Its Image," in Style: A Symposium, ed. Seymour Chapman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 11. The actual quote was taken from the summary of a discussion with Barthes following his reading of his paper.

⁸Barthes, p. 11. See above.

⁹Barthes, p. 6.

¹⁰Melvyn New, "Profaned and Stenciled Texts: In Search of Pynchon's V," The Georgia Review, 33 (1979), 398. New asserts that only a society's sacred scripture, propaganda, and the most simplistic, and therefore the least challenging, or disturbing, of its literature fits into a category for closed texts whose aim is to verify or convert to a system generally accepted by that society. All other literature tends to a greater or lesser degree away from verification of the received system while pushed toward it by the authors' and readers' needs to accord with it.

¹¹New, "Profaned and Stenciled Texts: In Search of Pynchon's V," pp. 397-398.

¹²Gide, 2, 57.

¹³J. Hillis Miller, "Narrative and History," English Literary History, 41 (1974), 460. From a different point of view, Miller addresses much the same issue New discusses. The reader of Middlemarch (and we can infer this to be a generalization applicable to most works of fiction) "links similar elements and makes patterns out of diversity in an activity which is shown in the narrative as being both entirely human and also inevitably in error, the imposition of a will to mastery over the text. As Nietzsche says, unwittingly echoing George Eliot herself, 'to be able to read off a text as a text without interpreting an interpretation is the last-developed form of "inner experience"--perhaps one that is hardly possible.'" Miller, p. 470, and Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, Para. 479, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 266. New would argue that such is neither possible nor desirable. Just as Miller seems to perceive the reader's attempt to order the fragments into a whole an unfortunate and largely uncontrollable reflex, New sees this activity as the reader's responsibility, his goal, his reason for approaching the literature in the first place.

¹⁴Miller, 468-471.

¹⁵Miller, 470.

¹⁶Frank Kermode, "A Modern Way with the Classic," New Literary History, 5 (1974), 418.

¹⁷The debate is not whether the musicologist who wishes to recover and reproduce the sound intended by the composer or at least that which musicians and instruments of the composer's age would provide is more to be admired than the musician who demands a culture's and a musician's privilege of interpreting the composition in the manner that best speaks to it or to him. The question is whether the musician or listener does not seek to assimilate the music into his realm of experience, using it to further his efforts to grasp the fragments of his world. We approach literature in just this way. However much we debate how it should be assimilated, we spend our energies endeavoring to assimilate it somehow.

¹⁸Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 50.

¹⁹Smith, p. 2.

²⁰Smith, p. 2.

²¹Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 138.

²²Frank Kermode, Novel and Narrative (Glasgow: Univ. of Glasgow Press, 1972), p. 10.

²³Smith, p. 71.

²⁴Smith, p. 110.

²⁵Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 18.

²⁶Brian Downs, Richardson (London: Routledge, 1928), p. 75.

²⁷Cynthia Griffin Wolff, Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, The Shoe String Press, 1972), p. 167.

²⁸Samuel Johnson, "Rambler 155," in Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, 1971), p. 128.

CHAPTER II
A MASTER DESIGN: RICHARDSON'S DEFINITION
AND DEFENSE OF HIS PLAN

An effort to consider the significance of closure in Richardson's Clarissa should perhaps begin with an examination of the materials relating to the novel's creation, revision, and reception. The body of sources from which we might draw conclusions concerning Richardson's intentions and problems is comparatively extensive, and, studied systematically, the sources indicate Richardson's initial surprise at the difficulties his readers encountered in apprehending the work as he intended them to do. It seems inadequate and unrealistic to look at the dilemma as entirely Richardson's own, even though he probably perceived it as such. From the author's point of view, the difficulty lay in carefully structuring the novel to ensure that its readers would interpret Clarissa as he believed they must and should if his labors were to be counted successful by himself at least and by most "thinking" and virtuous readers (the audience at whom he directed his efforts and for whose accolades he yearned) at best.

The history of Richardson's attempts successfully to close his work underscores the whole dilemma encountered by an author who finds himself caught in the midst of any

historical transition. Indeed, Richardson's correspondence, prefaces, and editions, as well as the critical responses he evoked, provide a private register of the social-spiritual evolution underway when Richardson's career as a writer of fiction began. By the 1740s, the tension between Christian and secular world views had led to tentative rather than confident responses. That is, few thinking individuals were prepared to insist upon an indisputable solution to any philosophical problem, especially one involving man's responsibility for shaping his own fate as opposed to submitting to a fate divinely imposed. No longer could an individual dismiss a situation which suggested alternative behaviors by declaring, "God's will be done!" However much he may have wished to believe that, the individual could not sidestep so readily his responsibility for active participation in the direction of his own life.¹

Such a historical situation causes Richardson a great deal of trouble when he attempts any unilateral approach to his subject or resolves to impose a single view on his readers. One author cannot, as Richardson's case clearly demonstrates, ensure a uniformly Christian interpretation from readers who are equipped with a makeshift Christian-secular viewpoint. I refer to their attitude as makeshift because they are necessarily caught in a transitory posture--unable unreservedly to relinquish Christian dogma,

but intellectually unable to accept that dogma without question or dispute. To return to New's suggestion that fiction of the mid-eighteenth century reflects man's vacillation between the inherently incompatible ideas of man as a divinely manipulated creature and man as a responsible, autonomous being, we begin to understand how decisively Richardson's efforts were doomed to failure as well as how inevitable it was that so many of his readers--thinking, virtuous readers--should suggest that alternatives do, indeed, exist for *Clarissa*, alternatives that Richardson wanted to eliminate from the realm of possibilities in the novel. Significantly, however, Richardson could not eliminate them because he could not alter his historical milieu. Once man could no longer see himself as the subject of an omniscient, omnipotent Monarch, the world view which frames and supports Richardson's Clarissa could not hold the weight of its own assumptions.

We need further to bear in mind that the author's writing technique created some of his problems. His method, in fact, undermined his meaning despite his intentions. In his "Lectures on the English Poets," William Hazlitt observes that in Clarissa there is nothing that is "unforced and spontaneous"; "the sympathy excited is not a voluntary contribution, but a tax."² The same seems to hold true for the author; Richardson shows himself a

product of his ambivalent age in that he is no longer content to write a story hinged basically on plot and resolution. As we discussed in Chapter I (page 4) above, in a fictional world dependent upon a single form of received wisdom, a writer need bother only about story construction, since the prevailing world view will supply the meanings and interpretations. This being so, when Richardson chose to resort to a method which would of necessity examine the minds and thought processes of his characters, he automatically set his novel in a realm beyond that of a core of received wisdom. If he looks within man's mind as a source for meaning, then an author cannot effectively insist that meaning can be imposed from outside man's mind. The best he can do is assert a combination of internally and externally devised meanings, and this situation leads directly to ambiguity.

In Clarissa's case, of course, the ultimate problem becomes a question of whether Clarissa indeed has to die or even ought to die under the circumstances. Unfortunately, Richardson wanted no such consideration to hold any real importance for the reader. He clearly wanted an externally imposed but internally perceived system of principles not only to prevail but to block out all other considerations. Nevertheless, by stepping away from Christian principles in theory and approaching them from the viewpoint of direct application or lack of such,

Richardson negates his own purpose. If man's freedom is brought into the fabric of the novel, then all current social and theological viewpoints must be dealt with too-- by the author if he chooses to do so, but by the critical reader whether he so chooses or not.

Thus, Richardson added to his burden not only by the method he chose to exploit so fully but within the very audience he was determined to address. Had he been content to appeal to the predominantly "religious" reader, whose faith in the ultimate validity of Christian doctrine was still strong despite the apparent narrowing of its influence (the audience, say, of Pilgrim's Progress), or if Richardson had aimed at those lesser readers who were entertained, reassured, and, therefore, satisfied by any literature which summed up and explained life in a systematic, coherent way (which myth predominated--Christian, persecuted innocence, middle-class superiority, any one of many--might be immaterial), or if he had been content to discourse with readers who simply wanted to see human behaviors tallied up, weighed, and recompensed, Richardson could have written Clarissa in a single publishable draft and basked in the approval he would have evoked.³

Unfortunately, perhaps, for his peace of mind concerning his fiction, Richardson the entrepreneur lived in a problematic world on which his moralistic inclination was destined to jar. In this "age of enlightenment," in

this world in which distinguished, and therefore influential, writers were, as Donald Greene phrases it, "sincere and convinced Christians," other writers whose world views were formed by their perceptions of the state, socially and spiritually, to which man had evolved were endeavoring to release the minds of their contemporaries from the superstitions that had long since begun to permeate institutionalized Christianity. Greene insists that the pre-eminent eighteenth-century English writers--Dryden, Swift, Johnson (and we would certainly add Richardson)--would have vehemently denied any similarity to or sympathy with the deistic, atheistic French philosophes--Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert--contemporary with them. While the French writers felt a need to liberate men from the "superstitions" of institutional Christianity, the English authors sought to validate and affirm the traditional teachings of organized Christianity. Nor did the great English writers of this age, with all their appreciation of classical literature, embrace the paganism evident in the works of such as Virgil, Ovid, and Horace.⁴

Indeed, Richardson's didactic lessons merge Christian dogma with generally accepted middle class social dogma. Likewise, the readers for whom Richardson intended his work, the audience whose agreement and approval he craved, were essentially educated people, those who moved about, as we have said, in the exciting world of new ideas and

new perceptions. Such people could not, even if they had chosen to do so, consider a predicament like Clarissa's from an exclusively theological point of view. They were obliged, as we have discussed, by their historical milieu to recognize in the heroine more than the constantly reiterated "divine," the "angel" Clarissa. Richardson's contemporary readers would also delight in reading about the human, the domestic, the middle-class nineteen year old of moneyed family and marriageable age, so informed was their perception by a shifting world view.

Just as the author undermines his own intentions by employing an epistolary method, thereby revealing and opening to analysis the minds of recognizable individuals in recognizable human situations and by writing for essentially sophisticated readers, so he undermines his efforts by writing his novel in secular terms and in a secular tone. The world in which Clarissa lives is wholly secular. Here the contrast with Fielding is opposite. In novels like Tom Jones and Amelia, Fielding provides his protagonists with clergymen and advisors, who reiterate, or at least reinforce, Christian doctrine and its absolute assurance that God offers direction through His revealed will. In contrast, Richardson proffers no such source of guidance for Clarissa. Indeed, the clergyman Dr. Lewen and the worthy Mrs. Norton approach Clarissa's problems from essentially secular perspectives. Their advice sounds

more like common sense and acceptable middle class social behavior than like Christian dogma, which is usually only insinuated by Richardson, if only because none of the characters can, within Richardson's realistic and social setting, be expected to deliver straightforward Biblical or doctrinal injunctions. When Providence is mentioned, for example, it is usually in a rather hopeless, helpless tone. Thus, in volume four, letter thirteen, Mrs. Norton writes to our heroine, "how shall we know what to pray for, when we pray, but that God's will may be done, and that we may be resigned to it!" (p. 49).⁵ The reader could hardly sense reassurance and direction from the Word in such a comparatively negative comment. And again in the same letter, Mrs. Norton, who receives so much credit for Clarissa's virtues, offers less than a positive Christian explanation for the girl's tribulations: "We are assured," she writes, "that nothing happens by chance; and that the greatest good may, for aught we know, be produced from the heaviest evils." By whom we are assured, Mrs. Norton neglects to say. At any rate, the manner in which she phrases her words of "comfort" to Clarissa opens the possibility that she herself finds them not particularly soothing but simply the only way to explain, even unsatisfactorily, the unpleasant occurrences of our lives. At best, we are reminded of Johnson's concluding paragraph of Rambler 184 ("On Chance"):

In this state of universal uncertainty, where a thousand dangers hover about us, and none can tell whether the good that he pursues is not evil in disguise, or whether the next step will lead him to safety or destruction, nothing can afford any rational tranquillity, but the conviction that, however we amuse ourselves with unideal sounds, nothing in reality is governed by chance, but that the universe is under the perpetual superintendence of him who created it. . . .⁶

More likely, we will simply return to that world of universal uncertainty, of danger and disguise and destruction that Richardson so vividly places before our eyes.

What we decidedly do not find in the novel, but would expect to find in a "Christian" tragedy, is a repeated insistence on an attentive Providence who oversees, controls, or directs the courses of events in men's lives. God does not directly motivate Clarissa in any action, nor does he foil Lovelace. Nor do we sense the pervasiveness in the novel of a retributive God. Lovelace remains unhampered by either God or man. No one seems to have any control over Lovelace or any power to curtail his activities. Even in the end, Lovelace's damnation is vague, unspecified. We do have Belford protesting, "But this is not nice. You have overstepped the bounds of reason and decency. Does your conscience permit you to continue?" And we do have Morden's vengeance, but we do not have the remorse and repentance one expects in a Christian fable. This is hardly the theological doctrine

of specific punishment for specifically acknowledged sin. Indeed, his actions are most often spoken of in the novel on a secular level--right and wrong, socially acceptable versus socially unacceptable--rather than on the theological level of good and evil, despite the fact that Clarissa is often labeled "good" and Lovelace "evil." Labels hold little value unless they indisputably summon up all the associations that have historically become attached to them. However, this can occur only when the fiction is closed by some variety of received wisdom, not when it merely includes, as Clarissa does, that received wisdom within a problematic imitation of social and moral reality. Clarissa may indeed pose some theological questions, but it does not offer, solely and without ambiguity, theological answers to them.

Indeed, Clarissa's world is in no way confined or encompassed by the Christian world view. Rather, Clarissa's social world forms the novel's fictional universe while the Christian world view forms no more than a kernel of significance. Put in other terms, we could say that man's world is now only penetrated at crucial points by the sense of a God-ordered universe. This despite Richardson's desire to impose Christian meaning. If Clarissa were presented as an essentially passive, but assured and reassured, female Job--the victim of Satan's whims who, having withstood the temptation to remove herself

from God's supervision in an effort to contrive her own escape, can finally claim her reward--readers could accept the story as a Christian fable or exemplum. Or even if Clarissa were a patient Griselda who, though lacking a specific justification for God's willingness to let her thus suffer, still endures with passive faith and humility, ultimately to be rewarded for her understanding not of her predicament but of the necessity to endure uncomplainingly, readers could respond to religious allegory. Clarissa, however, does not passively endure. Nor do we feel the hand of God manipulating her, directing her activities or responses to her circumstances. There is no spiritual explanation for her dilemma as there is for Job's. The story is not directly and obviously allegorical as Griselda's is, with our attention focused on the situation rather than on the characters themselves. The two dimensional characters in Chaucer's story never develop beyond types, precisely because Chaucer never wants us to agonize with an individual named Griselda.

On the other hand, because Clarissa's mind is available to us, we are aware of her fear, panic, despair, of her contrivances to elude Lovelace, defiance of her family and active designs to lessen their demands by refusal to cooperate and by negotiation of property and marriage rights. We experience the extent of her distaste for Solmes and her feeling of moral if not social superiority

over Lovelace. All of Clarissa's dilemmas are presented to us through the mind and emotions of a human being who must, unaided, extract herself from a bad situation as best she can. Never do we find in the novel the direct or indirect suggestion that God allowed her to get into this situation (whether to teach her humility or to demonstrate the reward He offers for those who withstand evil or for any other reason) nor the assertion that only God can deliver her. Instead, our attention is focused on whether Clarissa can deliver herself first from the marriage to Solmes, then from the rape, and, finally, from the social, moral, and psychological ramifications of the rape.

Critics like Lois Sklepowich, pushing a Christian interpretation of the novel, argue, of course, that this is precisely the point. Clarissa fights; she struggles to cope with her own affairs, while they progressively deteriorate. Only after the rape, when she finally ceases her struggles and resigns herself to God's direction does she experience peace and, ultimately, triumph and reward.⁷ However, a study of the novel after the rape occurs reveals that Clarissa can hardly be said to have resigned herself to whatever Lovelace or anyone else wishes to impose upon her. She can not even be said to have resigned herself to a death that is inevitable; rather she chooses death as the preferable alternative among those available.

The other characters, we should remember, suggest that she could marry Lovelace or bring suit against him.

If we contend that Clarissa ceases her struggles and commends herself to God's direction, we should be able to find a sense of the pervasiveness of God's hand in the remainder of her life after her violation. To do so, however, we would have to dismiss her flight from Lovelace, the letters she writes asking others for help or refuge, the deceptive note she sends Lovelace suggesting that she will see him again in her father's house (knowing full well he will not interpret the note accurately), her carefully orchestrated death arrangements in preparation for a funeral ceremony planned and, in effect, directed by her even after her death, the temporary hunger strike in the prison, and a host of other events which suggest that she is still attempting to deliver both her person and her sensibilities from offensive contact with Lovelace as well as secure her worldly reputation for virtue even after her demise. Nowhere do we sense the pervasive hand of God. Until close to the end of her trials, Clarissa does not seem to feel, though she sometimes talks about, a God-ordered response from her or from Lovelace. Toward the end, when she talks or writes of focusing on God's will, she finds she must direct all procedures herself, even to the extent of having in her possession her coffin, the embellishments of which she has designated. She seems to

be unable to trust man or God to fulfill her wishes--not God's wishes, but Clarissa's wishes.

Of course, the evidence indicates that Richardson perceived of Clarissa as a non-divine human being close to perfection in the Christian sense of the word and close to social perfection as well. This perception dictated his attempts to close his novel. Herein lay the extent of his choice really, for close his novel he must. Even an attempt to avoid closing his fictional world would constitute an effort to order that world. We have determined that he must order the world; the very purpose of writing is to order the world, to impose a system on the fragmentariness of life. Furthermore, Richardson the artist realized that the closure must pervade the novel, not just provide an ending. Of course, he must end the work to the extent that he must arrest expectation of continuation since literature is unavoidably teleological. Moreover, while the fiction must be directed toward some ultimate end whether or not the author consciously chooses that course, the author is free to offer direction and perspective for that end.

At this point, he runs headlong into the necessity of reconciling his various concerns in the fiction, his personal, moral, and social beliefs, and his historical milieu. There would seem to be two ways, mutually exclusive in most respects, to attack this artistic problem: from the

outside, by imposing social and theological restrictions on the individual; or from the inside by closing the gap between the public and the private conscience. In Clarissa, Richardson attempts the latter approach, which by definition requires delineating to a greater or lesser degree the peculiar individualities of at least the primary characters. This damages his chances of closing his work by imposition, however, simply because if he succeeds in creating the illusion of real people, then he cannot satisfy the artistic demands of his fictional world by imposing a specific doctrine upon them. Richardson cannot force his fictional individuals to think and react as his dogma dictates any more than he could force his friends and peers to respond to Clarissa, her associates, and her situation according to the Christian world view that he proffers.

That Richardson's greatest problems from the beginning, even before publication, were those of closure is underscored by the fact that the first reference to Clarissa which we have available to us in his correspondences addresses precisely the problem of objections to the tragic ending of the novel. In this letter, dated June 20, 1744, Edward Young knows of the ending and defends it against unspecified, but definitely plural, "critics."⁸ If Duncan Eaves and Ben Kimpel have calculated correctly, Richardson could not have begun work on Clarissa much

before the summer of 1742. Assuming that such a monumental composition required several years to get on paper even in rough draft form, we can see that Richardson apparently began to share the plan if not the text of his new novel almost immediately after composition began and almost certainly before the first draft was completed. Obviously, he also began to experience opposition to his planned conclusion literally from the outset.

In what was, even for the author of Clarissa, quite a lengthy letter, Richardson complained about emendations suggested by Aaron Hill, a dramatist and poet whom Pope satirized in the Dunciad and a long trusted correspondent of Richardson. In Hill's defense, it should be remembered that Richardson had solicited his friend's advice, specifying that the matter of chief concern was the possible abridgement of the long manuscript.⁹ Even so, the author reacted strongly to the emendations and explained in detail how they might interfere with the inculcation of the principles that he wanted to affirm. The importance of Richardson's response lies in the fact that it indicates how responsible he felt for closing his work, for severely limiting the reasonable interpretations of the story. Disturbed that Clarissa was already being misunderstood although not yet in print, Richardson writes to Hill:

I am very unfortunate, good Sir, let me say, *to be so ill-understood:* To have given Reason . . . to be so little understood; And how can I but doubt my own

Conduct in this Story, when, if I did not, I must question your Attention to it, in the most material Point of all, respecting my Heroine's Character, and, as I may say, one of the principal Morals that I proposed to be drawn from my Story? (Letters, January 26, 1747, p. 82)

Clearly, Richardson's purpose for writing superceded and perhaps preceded the conception of the plot. Nor did the author's allegiance to that purpose wane. On February 24, 1753 (by which time three editions of Clarissa had appeared), he wrote to Lady Bradshaigh lamenting the deletions made by the French translator, the Abbé Prévost, who, Richardson says,

treats the story as a true one; and says . . . that the English editor has often sacrificed his story to moral instructions, warnings, &c.--the very motive with me, of the story's being written at all.¹⁰

Undoubtedly, as Frederick W. Hilles has shown, Richardson was concerned with form, and cannot be accurately accused of constructing a "loose" novel in any sense of the word.¹¹ Nevertheless, the evidence indicates that the author first worked out his purpose, then his method. Indications of such priority setting can be discerned from comments like the one he made to Lady Bradshaigh in reference to the uncompleted Sir Charles Grandison: "I am a very irregular writer: can form no plan; nor write after what I have preconceived" (Correspondence, VI, 117). And later he admits to Johannes Stinstra, his Dutch translator, that

he was never regular enough to write according to a plan; thus, when he finished one letter, he "hardly knew what his next would be." Such comments might be taken to imply that Richardson had an idea for a story and was willing to let it tell itself, so to speak, in the course of following one episode by another. The fact is, however, that Richardson is actually suggesting that he wanted his didactic purpose to shape the form of the novel and the presentation of the story. The result is a compositional problem that works against his didactic purposes in that he grows diffuse. Nor was the author unaware of the complications of his mission. In a letter to Aaron Hill dated October 29, 1746, Richardson explains this approach to the subject matter in Clarissa.

I intended to be diffuse in my No-Plan . . . in order to take in all that I thought might be of Use from such Characters and Situations. . . .
(Letters, p. 71)

Really all the author needed was a clear understanding of his reasons for writing. Johnson summarized the entire situation with his usual grace:

The relator of feigned adventures, when once the principal characters are established, and the great events regularly connected, finds incidents and episodes crowding upon his mind; every change opens new views, and the latter part of the story grows without labour out of the former.¹²

The compositional considerations that should concern a writer are, of course, twofold. An author must first

delineate each character so that he is believable yet incorporates those traits which would allow him to convey the author's perceptions of him. Assuming that an author has always in view his purpose for writing and that he knows how he wants the narrative to be resolved, he will manipulate his material as carefully as possible to serve his predetermined ends. Even so, there are occasions when he will have choices to make. Herein lies his second difficulty. When the character could take one course of action or another, the author's choice will be guided by the allegiance he entertains for the aims which motivated him initially. Moreover, that choice will be logically supported by the flow of the narrative if the author has considered the demands of his aims from the inception of the story.

Richardson is no exception; when faced with logical alternatives in the plot, his purposes (didactic in this case) dictate a decision. Their study of Richardson's revisions have led Duncan Eaves and Ben Kimpel to insist that while Richardson undoubtedly altered his novel extensively as a result of criticism and in direct reaction to suggestions for changes made by others, he made revisions of any substantive nature only when not fully decided on the matter at hand in his own mind.¹³ Otherwise, Richardson revised only to bolster what he had already attempted to do, but, because of the rather heavy burden

of criticism he encountered, worried that he had failed to accomplish. No evidence exists to indicate that he ever altered his intentions, his perceptions of the story, or the basic progress of the story. Richardson had an exquisite sense of unity and even claimed that "long as the Work is, there is not one Digression, not one Episode, not one Reflection, but what arises naturally from the Subject and makes for it, and to carry it on." Indeed, his analysis proves to be accurate.

Yet, Richardson was conscious of having to contend with alternatives and how they coincided with his purpose. In a reply to Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson acknowledged the dilemma and spelled out his motives. To Lady Bradshaigh's suggestion that Lovelace could have reformed, Richardson agrees

that Lovelace might have been drawn a Penitent. But in a Performance where the Truth of Fact was not concerned, and where Invention was at Liberty, both Warning and Example demanded the Course I have taken.

You repeatedly say "that you wonder at nothing Lovelace says while in a Reprobate State." I must also repeat, that shocking as his Actions are, they are but the natural Consequences of his Principles, as laid down at his very first Appearance in the Story. (Letters, p. 115)

To Richardson's chagrin, however, some readers failed to recognize the cause and effect relationship between Lovelace as he was originally presented to them and the

decisions he subsequently made in pursuit of his goal. Of course, the readers often experienced the story more secularly than theologically, failing, therefore, to examine the presence or lack of artistic unity at least in terms of the Christian framework of the novel. Instead of responding to the story in terms of its theological thrust, these readers viewed the characters as though they were real people with real, but not irresolvable, difficulties. On the other hand, the didactic Richardson, while he clearly loved Clarissa, loathed Lovelace, and liked but rather disapproved of Anna Howe, focused on the needs of his story from a Christian point of view, structuring his narrative to serve his ends rather than structuring his ends to serve his story. What Richardson failed to realize was how his amplifications were working against his designs in spite of his intentions by leading the reader to respond to the material he gives us, to respond to the secular world he successfully mirrors. Certainly, Richardson wanted to employ his craft to accomplish his goals, and, on at least a conscious level, he never lost sight of his didactic purposes. Indeed, all his efforts were directed toward keeping his audience in touch with those crucial principles he wished to inculcate--a legitimate concern for any author. Edgar Allan Poe, in his classic statement on the structure of fiction, defined

the writer's responsibilities to his aims in any piece of fiction:

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents--he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design.¹⁴

Theoretically, Richardson knew what he was doing and what he had to do. His knowledge, or at least intuition, of his craft accounts for the absence of substantive change in the form or progress of Clarissa. Unfortunately for Richardson's peace of mind, he never felt comfortable enough to dismiss the objections of others. And fortunately for us, he was so anxious to obtain the understanding and approval of others that he answered critics by detailing what he intended any given aspect of the story to accomplish, what moral he wished it to inculcate. Elaborate prefaces, contents, postscripts, and so forth were appended to the novel itself. Hundreds of letters addressed to individuals clearly delineate Richardson's designs. However, even though his remarks often deal with one or another separate feature of the work, Richardson

always stressed implicitly or directly, as he did in his advertisement for the second edition of Clarissa, that his concern was for the reader to perceive the "Connexion of the Whole" and to "form a judgment of the blamable and laudable conduct of the characters." Surely then, his indignation should be understandable when critics failed to appreciate the dependence of the whole upon each of the parts. If the parts are executed correctly, then the whole naturally assumes a unity that admits of no variation. And if each incident flows logically from the preceding ones, then the resolution of the story must flow logically and naturally from the progress of the story as well. And so, Richardson cries out in dismay at criticism of his novel's end. Robert Louis Stevenson encountered a similar dilemma as he perused the fragment of High Woods, of which he had completed sixteen pages beyond his first chapter. Pleased with his work, he was at a loss how to finish it, insisting that nothing of the completed portion could be changed. Nor could the end be altered since all combined to form the only acceptable composition of the whole. Thus, Stevenson complains in a letter to his friend Sidney Colvin:

Make another end to it? Ah, yes, but that's not the way I write; the whole tale is implied; I never use an effect when I can help it, unless it prepares the end, that is to make the beginning all wrong. The denouement of a long story is nothing, it is just "a full close," which you may approach and

accompany as you please--it is a coda,
not an essential member in the rhythm;
but the body and end . . . is bone of
the bone and blood of the blood of the
beginning.¹⁵

Unlike an author who leaves us little more than his work to enlighten us concerning his attitudes and intentions, Richardson communicated so extensively with so many correspondents that his aims in Clarissa are neither obscure nor, on the face of it at any rate, particularly complex. Assuredly Richardson had very clear notions of what he wanted to achieve in his work. Furthermore, he refused to entertain the idea that any concepts other than those he originally intended to convey could be profitable to the reader. A study of his correspondence identifies the essential considerations that he wanted the text to recommend, divisible into two major categories--the social and the spiritual. Virtually all of the substantive emendations in every phase of his work in manuscript and in four lifetime editions were designed to clarify and support his original aims, which there is every indication did not change from the inception of the novel.

If we catalogue Richardson's professed aims, we notice that he, in fact, planned to make one rather straightforward plot serve a good many functions, and that he intended to accomplish this by extracting from the episodes a variety of principled observations which the reader could assimilate as suited his station in life or

social point of view. First among the social doctrines taught, for instance, is the proper attitude of individuals toward marriage. Thus, he argues against parents forcing a young woman into a marriage that offends her inclination. At the same time, however, he insists upon the parents' authority and duty in selecting marriage partners for their daughters. Closely related, furthermore, is the admonition that both parties should be judicious in their preferences. In a long letter to Aaron Hill, dated October 29, 1746, Richardson claims that

it is one of my Two principal Views,
to admonish Parents agt. forcing their
Children's Inclinations, in an Article
so essential to their Happiness, as
Marriage. . . . (Letters, p. 73)

On the other hand, children ought not to focus their desires on unworthy subjects, a tenet which leads directly to Richardson's second principal aim, that is, the serious error in assuming that a reformed rake makes an honorable husband. In explaining his attitude to Hill, Richardson credits Clarissa with an understanding of the ramifications of involving oneself with an unprincipled spouse.

And as I think the Passion [love], unless ye Object be undoubtedly worthy, and generous, ought to be subdued, and it is a Part of my Instruction from her Example, that Prudence may prevail over it, and should . . . I was very desirous, that it should appear to a Reader, that had so excellent a Creature been left to her self, well as she might have liked him had he been a moral Man, she would have overcome her Liking to him;

and despised him: And then I was willing to explode . . . that pernicious Notion, that a Reformed Rake . . . makes the best Husband. (Letters, p. 73)

To complicate Clarissa's predicament, of course, Richardson has her parents choose poorly and then proceed to apply undue force to realize their schemes, thus literally making her a sacrifice to their own wills. Even so, Richardson denies her the right to assert her own will over that of her family although assertion of her will is the only evident means of avoiding marriage to the odious Solmes, for another of his aims was to insist that one must do one's duty whether or not others choose to do theirs. On August 2, 1748, Richardson wrote to Susanna Highmore to clarify his position on duty.

In the poor ineffectual History of Clarissa, the parents are made more cruel, more implacable, more punishable in short in order to inculcate this very doctrine, that the want of duty on one side enhances the merit on the other, where it is performed. . . . Nor will I allow, that she shall be judged in this respect by any thing but by the duty on her part (as they are to be condemned, on theirs, by the want of it); much less by the partial passions of such as think they should not have been able to act as she did. An example is an example; right is right; and wrong is wrong; whether we can or cannot come up to the one, or avoid the other. (Correspondence, II, 217-218)

Richardson wants to emphasize that Clarissa's sense of duty as an obedient daughter should be quite independent from the advisability or wisdom of her parents'

decision concerning courtship. Their failure in their duty toward her does not justify any failure in her duty toward them. Herein lies Clarissa's one error in moral judgment. To Aaron Hill (January 26, 1747), Richardson insists that he wants Clarissa not to be perfect but to have no voluntary faults except in agreeing to go off with Lovelace, though the decision is justified and she thinks better of it on reflection (Letters, p. 83). Had she honored her father's restriction on her correspondence with Lovelace, regardless of the compulsion she felt to prevent violence between her brother and Lovelace, she would not have been in a position to be tricked away by Lovelace.

Richardson saw more than just a lapse of duty in Clarissa's situation when she leaves with Lovelace. Another caution he wished to offer readers is that young women must not put themselves in the power of their lovers, but to steadfastly insist on the "punctilios" until they have assumed the duties and privileges of wifehood. His concern was not only for propriety and reputation but for safety for the women as well. Apparently, Richardson believed that a man ought not be tempted with too much power. He pointed out to Aaron Hill that women rarely recognize the faults of the men they love as clearly as other people do. Besides, Lovelace "acknowledges honorable Love; and has no Intention of other, till he find her in his Power" (Letters, p. 81).

Most of Richardson's aims could have been met without the necessity of death for both Clarissa and Lovelace. However, having determined that his characters must die, Richardson moved from strictly social considerations, even of a moralistic nature, to a frankly Christian posture. Clearly, Richardson's aim was not to superimpose this framework over the social one; instead, he perceived it as an equally inseparable part of the fabric of the novel. His explanation to Frances Grainger on January 22, 1750, emphasized the ultimate significance of the Christian concept. From his statement, we can be sure that, for Richardson, social and Christian values merge:

Remember this Great Rule, inculcated thro'out the History of Clarissa, That in all reciprocal Duties the Non-Performance of the Duty on one Part is not an excuse for the Failure of the other. Why . . . are future Rewards promised and future Punishments threatened? But the one to induce us to Persevere in our Duties here, the other to Punish our Deviation from them. She was not bid to obey even unjust Powers not only for Wrath but for Conscience Sake. No one that disapproves of the Conduct of Clarissa and of her Principles but must find fault with the Doctrines laid down in the Bible, or know not what they are. . . . The Bear and Forbear, the uncontentious Giving up the Cloak also, rather than to dispute or litigate for the Coat--The turning the unsmitten Cheek--The Forgiveness of those that hate us and despitefully use us--The Praying for our Enemies--The Christian Meekness--The Affiance in God's Mercy, Power, and Goodness, as what shall infallibly reward us hereafter for our Patience and Suffering here. . . .

And as to the other Part of the Christian Doctrine of Terror-menaced

Punishment, see it set forth in the Punishment of Lovelace and of the whole Harlowe Family, even in this World. . . . shall not a Christian Heroine trust to Heaven for her own Reward? Shall she elbow, scuffle, contend, and be vindictive, rather than intitle herself to the Blessings held in Store for the Patient, the resigned, the persevering mind? (Letters, p. 144)

The natures, actions, and circumstances of the two major characters dictated, it seemed to Richardson, one inevitable end. The author endorses primarily those Christian values that coincide with generally accepted social standards in societies affected strongly by the Christian myth as well as in many essentially non-Christian cultures. However, when the time comes to dispose of the characters, Richardson turns directly to Christian doctrine. Perhaps the basically social nature of the tale causes difficulties for the reader who has been in effect programmed to expect some kind of socially acceptable solution to the entanglement, but finds none offered.

There are a number of explanations for Richardson's belief that Clarissa and Lovelace must die. First, from a purely artistic point of view, Richardson realized that he could not very well justify his tale if they lived and married. He had already thought out the ramifications of the two possible endings--marriage or the one he provides--and was prepared to draw a comparison for Lady Bradshaigh (October 26, 1748):

Had I drawn my Heroine reconciled to Relations unworthy of her, nobly resisting the Attacks of an intrepid Lover; overcoming her Persecutors; and baffling the wicked Designs formed against her Honour, marrying her Lovelace, and that on her own Terms--educating properly and instructing her Children--What however, usefull, however pleasing the Lesson, I had done more than I had done in Pamela? (Letters, p. 92)

And again on December 15th of 1748, he berates Lady Bradshaigh for still preferring her ending [marriage] to the original, which the author thinks "from the Premises the only natural one." Clearly, he was bothered that others thought a worldly ending equally natural "from the Premises." The discovery leads him to worry about the effectiveness of his closure, the clearness of his intentions.

I am sorry that it was supposed that I had no other end in the Publication of so large a Piece . . . but the trite one of perfecting a private Happiness, by the Reformation of a Libertine. . . .

Indeed . . . I could not think of leaving my Heroine short of Heaven: Nor that I should do well if I punished not so premeditated a Violation; and thereby made Pity on her Account, and Terror on his join to complete my great End, for the sake of Example and Warning. (Letters, pp. 103-104)

Of course, Richardson could have punished Lovelace through legal channels, managing to vindicate Clarissa by disclosing to the world not only Lovelace's treatment of her but her family's as well. However, as we have already

determined, such a procedure would at the very least negate his efforts to inculcate the principles that he enumerated for Frances Grainger. On the other hand, while marrying her off would be trite and seeking legal redress would be socially acceptable but moralistically self-defeating, death would serve as a vehicle to inculcate still other teachings. He could, for instance, deal with the problem of moral inequity and injustice in this life. All of us face the dilemma of accounting for the afflictions that befall the "good" among us. Richardson saw Clarissa as an opportunity to suggest that her only hope for justice was in a life removed from this one. That this concept was crucial to the work, Richardson admits to Aaron Hill (October 29, 1746); the doctrine of future rewards and punishments was so pertinent that "I had not indeed, sat down to scribble on this Subject, but with this View" (Letters, p. 73).

As with most tales that end with the death of a good person, Clarissa's would probably have remained absolutely undisputed if she had been a character of unusual, that is, heroic, circumstances--a Joan of Arc, a beleaguered princess sacrificed to political intrigue, or even a virgin thrown into the volcano at some high priest's command. Readers seem capable of rationalizing the death of a good person as long as they can say, "It is the will of God." But the circumstances have somehow to be enveloped

in a myth. On the other hand, when the tale is enveloped primarily in a social, especially bourgeois, aura and deals with people who hold no special position in the social, political, or spiritual order, the death is difficult to perceive in mythical, or mystical, terms. With the move by the eighteenth century from the idea of a particular providence to a general one in which man's importance is directly related to the social niche he fills, the concept of man became more utilitarian, less mythical. The practical eighteenth-century reader might have some trouble accepting Clarissa's death as anything more than an inexplicable waste--as of a useful commodity. And since Lovelace's evil is somewhat mitigated by socially valuable characteristics such as wealth, appearance, and position, his death, too, might seem a waste. After all, he is not the unrelieved and essentially unmotivated villain that Iago is. Richardson even admitted to Lady Bradshaigh (December 15, 1748) that Lovelace could be reformed, but that that would eliminate the possibility of appropriating all the didactic uses that his death would serve.

I must own . . . that I think David's Crime in his Adultery and Murder, infinitely greater than that of Lovelace, and that Lovelace might have been drawn a Penitent. But in a Performance where the Truth of Fact was not concerned, and where Invention was at Liberty, both Warning and Example demanded the Course I have taken. (Letters, p. 115)

Moreover, there is a further consideration in the acceptability of deaths of heroes versus the deaths of "ordinary" characters. Because we can rationalize the death of one who attains extraordinary stature, we can assimilate the situation and protect ourselves emotionally. In other words, we are far less affected by such a death than by the inexplicable end of an admirable, but ordinary person. For this reason, Richardson chose to concentrate on the mundane, on characters with whom the reader could identify.¹⁶ Because each reader can recognize the characters as individuals not unlike himself, he can conclude that those principles and warnings that apply to the characters apply to him as well. Responding to his friend, Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson remonstrates with her for lamenting her loss of composure as she peruses Clarissa. She ought to honor her sensibility, he suggests, by perceiving it as humanity, not as weakness. Such a response was his goal when he chose to draw Clarissa as noble and good, but thoroughly human. He writes,

You say "that you are not affected in the same sensible manner by Distresses in unnatural Heroics, as you are when they appear purely in Nature; where the Distresses come nearer one's Self." This is exceedingly well said. This was one of the principal Reasons of writing the History of Clarissa. (Letters, December 15, 1748, pp. 105-106)

Richardson wanted to deal with death for other reasons, too. On October 26, 1748, he wrote to Lady Bradshaigh that

he wanted to refamiliarize the reader with the inevitability of death and an afterlife of rewards and punishments.

But why . . . is Death painted in such shocking Lights, when it is the common Lot? If it is become so terrible to human Nature, it is time to familiarize it to us--Hence another of my great Ends . . . "Don't we lead back," says my divine Girl on a certain Occasion . . . a starting Steed to the Object he is apt to start at, in order to familiarize him to it, and cure his starting?" (Letters, p. 95)

The idea of death that Richardson wanted to assert was, of course, a Christian one. The Christian (and Richardson's eighteenth-century England was still professing itself to be Christian) does not view death as a merely physiological fact. He sees death as a goal, a welcome relief from this tedious life of inequities. "And what," says the Christian Richardson, "is the temporary Happiness we are so fond of? What the long Life we are so apt to covet?" (Letters, to Lady Bradshaigh, October 26, 1748, p. 91). This life serves only as a testing period and separation from God, according to standard Christian teaching. The virtuous earn the assurance of a heavenly reward in place of the unreliable peace and happiness that this life can offer--a genuinely permanent happy end rather than a tentative worldly one. Thus, though he does not succeed, Richardson is justified if he chooses to draw Clarissa suffering the severe testing of a Job or a gentle Griselda

to perfect her for Heaven. In refamiliarizing us with death, with the transitoriness and fragility of happiness in this life, and with the assurance of justice (for good and evil) in the afterlife, Richardson intends his story to carry the reader above "irascible Passions" to meekness of heart and dignity of mind, "to strengthen the tender Mind, and to enable the worthy Heart to bear up against the Calamities of Life" (Letters, to Lady Bradshaigh, December 15, 1748, p. 116). If this is to be our viewpoint, then, life, indeed, would be a punishment to a Clarissa, though a reprieve for a Lovelace. The reader need only acknowledge the Christian doctrine he claims to subscribe to and concede with the author that "There is no Inquisition in the Grave . . . and the Day of Death is better than the Day of our Birth" (Letters, to Lady Bradshaigh, October 26, 1748, p. 96).

Not only did Richardson determine that he must validate the doctrines of future rewards and punishments in an afterlife, of the transitoriness of happiness in this life, of the necessity for an ordinary, but virtuous, person to bear up under the calamities of life and the inevitability of death, and similar Christian themes, but he knew why he wanted to authenticate such ideals. By drawing Clarissa an example from the reality of the readers' social world, Richardson wanted to teach lessons with an amusement, which the young and worldly

would reject if they were forced on them in a sermon. Religion, he tells Lady Bradshaigh, "never was at so low an Ebb as at Present"; therefore, he wants to attempt a religious novel (Letters, October 26, 1748, pp. 91-92).

In his Postscript, Richardson laments the "general depravity" of the age and admits to attempting to use society's devotion to entertainment and diversion to sneak in on his readers an investigation of "the great doctrines of Christianity." The author, claims Richardson,

has lived to see scepticism and infidelity openly avowed, and even endeavored to be propagated from the press: the great doctrines of the gospel brought into question. . . .

He has resolved therefore to attempt something that never yet had been done. He considered that the tragic poets have as seldom made their heroes true objects of pity, as the comics theirs laudable ones of imitation: and still more rarely have made them in their deaths look forward to a future hope. And thus, when they die, they seem totally to perish. Death, in such instances . . . must be considered as the greatest evil.¹⁷

Consequently, he has decided to make the evil characters die terrible deaths while the good Clarissa dies so amiably that the readers will wish to enjoy such a death, while they outright flee a death like Lovelace's or Sinclair's. The effect of Richardson's effort should be to reinforce precepts which make passage through this life easier and more exemplary and focus the reader's mind on

the brevity of that passage and on neglected Christianity. If the reader sees Clarissa as one like himself whose virtue is guaranteed a reward, or sees Lovelace as one like himself whose vice is likewise guaranteed its punishment, then the reader, Richardson deduces, is perhaps more likely to focus on his own condition. Again we remember Samuel Johnson's accustomed directness, "we all know our own state, if we could be induced to consider it."

Nor should the author ever lose sight of his aim if he wishes, as Richardson does, to remind the reader of his mortal condition. The writer is bound by "the great doctrines" of the religious system that he chooses to validate. Trying to explain his obligations to Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson says,

A Writer who follows Nature and pretends to keep the Christian System in his Eye, cannot make a Heaven in this World for his Favorites; or represent this Life otherwise than as a State of Probation. Clarissa . . . could not be rewarded in this World. To have given her her Reward here, as in a happy Marriage, would have been as if a Poet had placed his Catastrophe in the Third Act of his Play, when the audience were obliged to expect two more. What greater Proof can be given of a World after this, for the rewarding of suffering Virtue, and for the punishing of oppressive Vice, than the Inequalities in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments here below? (Letters, December 15, 1748, p. 108)

Of the difficulties encountered by Richardson as he presented to the world the story of Clarissa Harlowe's

struggle with her family and Lovelace, her violation by Lovelace, and her lingering decline into Christian repose, those causing him genuine distress were suggested emendations that could materially interfere with the inculcation of the principles upon which the work was based. If the principles forming the foundation of the work are many, a likely problem is excessive length. Surely, no one has ever denied that Richardson faced this dilemma, and many have even insisted that he was defeated by it. However that may be, he was, in fact, acutely aware of the abnormal bulk of the novel. An ambitious intention coupled with a natural verbosity resulted in a monumental work. Nevertheless, Richardson tried to reduce the bulk. In a letter to Aaron Hill dated October 29, 1746, he thanks Hill for attempting to help and indicates steps he himself has taken to shorten Clarissa, but always with an eye to the effects of a given passage. If he can strengthen his purpose by cutting, he is willing to do so.

I had put many of the Repetitions of the same Facts, as Lovelace, and as the Lady gave them, by way of Notes: And alter'd them, they breaking in upon the Narration; and his wicked Levity turning into a kind of unintended Ridicule half the serious and melancholy Reflections, which she makes on her Situation: So I alter'd them back: But yet, preserving only those Places in his, where his Humour, and his character are shewn, and his Designs open'd, have put many others, into a merely Narrative Form, referring for the facts to hers, &c., of some of hers, vice-versa. This has helped me to shorten much. . . . (Letters, p. 71)

The description we have here of Richardson's working methods strongly implies that "shortening" is not a precise account of what he was doing. Both the length and his efforts to reduce it are bound up in his definition of authorial responsibility. The author does not suggest any effort to eliminate all repetitions. To the contrary, he makes it clear that he quite deliberately included them in the novel in the first place. A simple record of the events is not his concern. He wants, instead, to draw a limit to those angles from which a particular moral can be drawn. To that end, he frequently offers both Clarissa's and Lovelace's versions of the same interview or incident. When Richardson tries to "streamline" but finds doing so detrimental to the principle he wants the reader to apprehend, he admits to changing tactics yet again. Thus, the author is, in the true sense, revising, not cutting, although he genuinely hoped that the revisions would result in a more compact publication. The task of ultimate importance, however, is to create the episodic structure so carefully that not only is the meaning and significance of each episode and attitude immediately and unmistakably perceived by the attentive reader but that reader should also experience an ennobling, uplifting, even spiritualizing effect.

With a clear notion of what he wanted to accomplish in his tale, Richardson tried to formulate a technique that

would ensure authorial control of interpretation. Undeniably, Richardson's primary concern was not for plot. He held no allegiance to any particular story except as it would serve to elucidate those principles that he predetermined to dramatize. There is in Clarissa no unnecessary complication of plot. His task was, to his mind, that of constructing his work carefully enough to have complete control over the interpretations of his readers. He wanted to decide himself what his readers would learn and what their attitudes should be toward what they learned. With this end in view, Richardson worked and reworked his story for many years, not because he was dissatisfied with it, but because readers persisted in misinterpreting the basic premises of the novel.¹⁸

Clarissa was apparently finished in first draft by 1744, at which time Richardson began to circulate the manuscript among his friends, gearing his revisions to reflect their "misunderstandings" (as he perceived almost any substantive objection) and to deal with the surprising length of the work. By September of 1746, Richardson provided Hill with a typically detailed compendium summarizing the story so that Hill could have the entire story before him as he endeavored to comply with the author's request to identify those areas in which the work could be shortened. Despite the offense taken by Richardson to Hill's efforts and Richardson's refusal to

incorporate most of Hill's (and other readers' suggestions) into his revisions, Clarissa was extensively altered before the first edition.¹⁹ Furthermore, the author continued to revise even after the initial volumes appeared. So greatly had he altered the end of the novel (Volumes V-VII of the first edition), that he printed extra quantities of these final volumes to accompany a revised edition of the first four volumes, the first edition of which had appeared in pairs on December 1, 1747, and April 28, 1748. The second edition was offered for sale on June 15, 1749, six months after the first publication of Volumes V-VII on December 6, 1748.

Shirley Van Marter's study of the changes in the partial second edition indicates that a great number of minor changes in grammar, modes of address, tone and diction and the like combine with substantive emendations to alter the color of the narrative fairly extensively. The major revisions serve a variety of functions: *Clarissa* no longer appears to indulge in deceitfulness by pretending illness at one point and later by dramatizing an existent illness, both to forestall the threatened forced marriage to Solmes; *Clarissa* is rendered less blamable for her forbidden correspondence with Lovelace and her elopement; *Clarissa*'s worldliness is diminished by excising some of her concern for financial independence and social position; Mrs. Harlowe is painted more strongly as an essentially

good but weak personality, poisoned by the oppressive atmosphere of Harlowe House.²⁰ The second edition also contained certain cosmetic alterations designed to further the readers' understanding of the work. As William Sale points out, Richardson decided in this second edition to delete two prefaces that had been published with the first edition because he believed that the book no longer needed the advertisement since it was by now so well-known and serious objections had been addressed in the postscript that Richardson appended to the final volume of the first edition. Instead, this time he added an elaborate Table of Contents, possibly based on the compendium that he had submitted to Hill three years earlier. In this Table, Richardson italicized passages which would answer objections to the narrative. And, not to be unfair to anyone, he also published the contents separately for the benefit of customers who had purchased the first edition.²¹

Again, we encounter evidence that the author was more concerned that his story be interpreted as he meant it than that he enjoy the best possible return on his investment. To Hill's query about the economic advisability of making the substance of Clarissa available without the necessity of buying the book, Richardson replied:

As I had not a View principally to my Profit, but hoped to do some good by my Clarissa, I chose +in my Second Edition+ to give a little Abstract of the Story, that it might be clearly seen what it was, and its Tendency; and to obviate as I

went along, tho' covertly, such Objections as I had heard (as I have done by the Italicks) altho' I made many Persons Masters of the Story to my Detriment as to sale. And I thought this necessary also for the sake of those who had read it, at the distant Periods in which it was published (Two Volumes, and Two, and Three) and would not chuse to read 7 tedious Volumes over again, as a Help to their Recollection, and to their Understanding of it, in the Way I chose to have it understood in. (Letters, July 12, 1749, pp. 125-126)

May of 1750 saw the printing of two new editions, both referred to as the third edition, one in duodecimo and the other in octavo (intended, according to Sale, to accompany the sixth edition of Pamela). For this new text, Richardson revised and added to the entire work, publishing it this time in eight volumes of uniform type. Again, we find Richardson asking a correspondent (this time David Graham of King's College, Cambridge) to criticize and correct, while at the same time Richardson catalogues some of the emendations he already intends to incorporate into the third edition:

You will greatly oblige me, Sir, in transmitting to me any Objections that you shall think of Weight, and any Corrections either in Style of Expression. . . .

I intend to restore a few Letters, and not a few Passages in different Places of the Work long as it already is (by particular Desire) and shall distinguish the Additions by turn'd Full Points, as we call them, or Dots, in the manner of turn'd Commas. Instead of prefixing, as in the Second Edition, the whole Contents, I think to add to each

Volume its particular Contents, which will serve at once for an Index to point to the most material Passages, in the Volume, and for a +brief+ Recapitulation of Facts, which will enable the less attentive Reader, in a work of such Length, to carry on the Thread of the Story to the next Volume, without anticipating ye greater Events. (Letters, May 3, 1750, p. 158)

The restored passages had been cut from the manuscript that eventually became the first edition. Evidently, Richardson tended to believe that all but the most minor deletions were damaging to the intention of the work. The third edition contains a new preface which explains why the author separates the contents and affixes to each volume that section relating to it. By publishing the contents in the first volume of the second edition, Richardson believed he had revealed too much to the new reader who should instead move more directly into the text of the story itself. Clearly, he assumed that readers would, in fact, read through the entire lengthy and detailed summary of the novel before glancing at the following pages.

In addition, Richardson added to the conclusion of the novel to emphasize that the Harlowes belatedly realized Clarissa's excellence and to elaborate upon the stories of the two prostitutes, Sally Martin and Polly Horton, so as to draw upon the full value of the lesson suggested by these characters. As with the contents, which were published separately for the benefit of first edition readers,

Richardson published Letters and Passages Restored to Clarissa for first and second edition readers. This volume appeared on April 20, 1751, with the third edition in duodecimo and octavo. Another supplement to the third edition is referred to as a collection of sentiments incorporated into the eighth volume. The collection was possibly begun by Solomon Lowe, a neighbor of Richardson at North End, and revealed to the author in May of 1748. After Sir Charles Grandison was completed, Richardson returned to the collection and in 1755 published A Collection of Moral Sentiments, gleanings from all three of his novels. (Sale further reports that some of these sentiments were printed on cards. The game, called "The New Impenetrable Secret; or Young Lady and Gentleman's Polite Puzzle," was advertised in the London Chronicle of April 22-24, 1760. The cards were in a ninth edition by 1771.) In a fourth and last edition of Clarissa (this time little altered) published during Richardson's lifetime, the sentiments were deleted because they had appeared separately in the 1755 volume.²²

Most authors have typically not offered their works for the criticism of a host of friends and acquaintances who could not necessarily be trusted to share the opinions of the author or even to approve or comprehend his efforts. Because he implemented virtually nothing of substance suggested to him nor bowed to pressures to

avert the rape or to allow Clarissa to live, it is evident that Richardson invited comment only to test readers' responses to the lessons he was endeavoring to teach. He did not mistrust his own judgment. Indeed, in the list of revisions just cited, Richardson never once wavers from his original plan nor alters his approach to his task, but almost agonizes over his attempts to limit the available interpretations of Clarissa. His friend John Spence sympathized with Richardson's distress and advised him to avoid the source by ignoring the criticisms and helpful suggestions offered by others.

How much you suffer from the contrariety of advices that have been given you. Such a multitude of opinions can only serve to confuse your own judgment, which I verily believe would direct you better, without any help, than with so much. . . . If you bundle up the opinions of bad judges in your head, they will only be so much lumber in your way; and even the opinions of good judges, in general, when they come to decide about particulars in your Clarissa, are much to be suspected.

Have they sufficiently considered your design and manner of writing in that piece? Do they know the connections and dependencies of one part upon another . . . acquainted with your various ends in writing it. . . ? Without these lights, a very good judge may give a very wrong opinion about the parts that compose it. Another defect in those that are called the best judges is, that they generally go by rules of art; whereas your's is absolutely a work of nature. One might, for instance, as well judge of the beauties of a prospect by the rules of architecture, as of

your Clarissa by the laws of novels and romances. (Correspondence, II, January 21, 1748, pp. 320-321)

Likewise, Dr. John Channing wrote to Richardson in a letter dated November 28, 1748, "I think your Postscript unnecessary, and too great a Deference paid to the Opinions of many of your Friends. . . ." ²³ Interestingly, Channing would have been right except for the fact that the opinions of readers is precisely what mattered to Richardson. Clarissa was the means, but the end was to cause a specific reaction and exact a specific intellectual assent from every reader of Clarissa.

Moreover, Richardson's readers must respond to Clarissa as a novel, Spence's observation notwithstanding. The author did not offer the work as a representative of another genre although he told Hill that he intended "more than a Novel or Romance by this Piece and that it is of the Tragic Kind" (Letters, November 7, 1748, p. 99). In fact, when he justifies in his Postscript his efforts to address objections made to various aspects of the work, he refers the attentive reader to his Preface in which he declares:

This work being addressed to the public as an history of life and manners, those parts of it which are proposed to carry with them the force of example, ought to be as unobjectionable as is consistent with the design of the whole, and with human nature. ²⁴

In a letter to Richardson dated January 26, 1749, Thomas Edwards laments that some will not appreciate

Clarissa and thinks it "the reproach of the age" if Clarissa is not well received by the public (Correspondence, III, 2-3). Indeed, the novel was well received in that it stimulated a great deal of interest and discussion. Moreover, some readers accepted it largely as Richardson wished. Representative of responses approved and treasured by the author is that of Mary Granville Delany, wife of Patrick Delany, Dean of Down. Mrs. Delany writes to Richardson (January 25, 1748-49),

I was surprized to find Clarissa's Distress rise to so great a Height; and flattered myself, that she would have escaped the worst of her Persecutor's Villainies. But I see plainly your excellent Design in it: Her End could not have been so exalted, so glorious, and so exemplary, had she not been the most injured of Women: Her Humiliation, and Forgiveness to all her implacable Tormentors, makes her a truly Christian Heroine. (Stinstra, p. 39)

However, the approbation, as we know, was hardly unmitigated. Responses varied, but the most crucial ones that Richardson had to address related to the appropriateness of Clarissa's reactions to her situation and to Lovelace, to whether Lovelace was really so objectionable after all, and, of course, to the rape and tragic ending. Did Clarissa have to suffer the rape and then was it necessary for her to die?

On December 14, 1748, Richardson complained to Astraea and Minerva Hill that "there are Numbers of your Sex, who

pity the Lovelace you are affrighted at and call Clarissa perverse, over-delicate, and Hard-hearted; and contend that she ought to have married him" (Letters, pp. 102-103). This statement sums up rather well the very attitudes that Richardson was trying to forestall. Yet even the most gifted readers often committed the error. In discussing just the kind of critical assessment that Richardson would perceive as a trivialization of his noble didactic goals, Eaves and Kimpel remind us that Stendhal attributed Clarissa's refusal to marry Lovelace and her death to "a foolish conventionality or even more foolish pique." Reports Stendhal,

I have not read the boring Clarissa for a long time; however, it seems to me that it is through feminine pride that she lets herself die and does not accept the hand of Lovelace.²⁵

Some readers would have resolved the problem by having Clarissa more openly in love with Lovelace. Edward Moore, for example, proposed to write a play based on Clarissa in which one of his major "improvements" would have been to make her more clearly in love. In the novel, Richardson acknowledges reader assaults on Clarissa's punctilio when she tells Captain Tomlinson at Hampstead that Lovelace has by his actions made her seem "over-nice."

It seems that many readers would have been willing to excuse Clarissa's perceived coldness and prudery if in the end she had married Lovelace. In a letter to Solomon

Lowe, Richardson responds to Thomas Cooper's suggestion that Clarissa marry Lovelace, only to discover that the rake does indeed turn out to be a bad husband. The author's position was that while such an end would bolster the one aim of teaching that a rake is poor husband material, it would not serve his other aims, and, in particular, would rob Clarissa of her triumph over all who misused her. And yet, there were those who argued that she abetted her oppressors and apparently thereby forfeited a triumph. Albrecht von Haller, a Swiss physician, physiologist, poet, and writer of philosophical romances, says of Clarissa that

she shows too scrupulous a delicacy after she has suffered herself to be carry'd off by Lovelace. . . . It then became expedient for her to marry Lovelace, who, more than once, offer'd her his hand, in the involuntary transports of his passion.--A lady, who has once put herself into the power of her lover, is no longer to affect distance, or expect the punctilios of courtship should be observed.²⁶

There was another interest quite apart from dispute about Clarissa's propriety that induced many readers, particularly women, to urge marriage on Clarissa despite the deceptions and abuse perpetrated on her by Lovelace. They liked Lovelace. They saw him as a romantic villain, handsome, rich, and charming at will, and thus surely not irredeemable. To avoid condemning Lovelace, these readers tend to criticize Clarissa instead. Writing to Richardson

on April 13, 1749, Miss Jane Collier related a second-hand discussion concerning Clarissa and Lovelace.

Mr. Harris was telling me the other day, that he heard your sweet girl most unmercifully condemned for not marrying Lovelace at St. Alban's. "She should (said the lady who blamed her) have laid aside all delicacy; and if Lovelace had not asked her in the manner she wished, she ought to have asked him" And more things of the same kind she ran on with; but, at last, closed all with saying, "In short, Lovelace is a charming young fellow, and I own I like him excessively."

You know I love to tell you every thing I hear concerning your Clarissa, or otherwise I should not furnish you with more instances of what you have reason to say you too often meet with; namely, the fondness most women have for the character of Lovelace. (Correspondence, II, 66)

In trying to explain to Richardson, who as late as 1754 was still suffering what he believed to be misreadings of his work, how his audience could be so naive or obtuse, as the case may be, Sarah Fielding reminds him that "Lovelace had wit and liveliness. . . . You could make him agreeable whenever we were not reading his heart" (Correspondence, II, 70, July 6, 1754). Richardson had dealt since he first circulated his manuscript with reader inattention, with audience willingness to accept what appears to be Lovelace's character of the moment without weighing into the picture all the prior clues provided of his ability to play the chameleon and change his shade to suit his surroundings. Furthermore, we must recall

von Haller's insistence that Clarissa take the expedient course, not what Richardson considered to be the morally right course. To Richardson's audience expediency dictated marriage. Later she could deal in private (that is, without disturbing the readers' comfort) with the manifold difficulties that surely would ensue from taking this expedient course.

In fact, Richardson made Lovelace sufficiently charming that not only did many readers berate Clarissa and insist that she take him anyway, some readers even suggested that Lovelace's character be improved a bit. So trusted a reader as Aaron Hill (at least until he alienated Richardson by complying with Richardson's charge to shorten and emend) commented that perhaps Lovelace's conduct could be softened. He could be less arrogant. He could be less insulting when and after he duels with James. In fact, he could indisputably excite Clarissa's "downright Love."²⁷

Predictably, another area of objection for Richardson's contemporary readers was the rape. Most proffered revisions deleted it, of course. Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson's closest correspondent, in the marginalia of her copy of volume seven, wrote what she thought would be a more acceptable ending. It is happier but more prosaic. According to Lady Bradshaigh,

Lovelace should have attempted, but not executed, the "last outrage," and Clarissa, after reaching the brink of death, should have recovered to live on unmarried, edifying her neighbors, rearing her wicked brother's worthy son, cheering her widowed mother, advising Mrs. Hickman (née Howe) on family matters, and even evincing "a sort of distant friendship with Lovelace, to his soul, I mean."²⁸

Lady Bradshaigh's sister, Lady Echlin, went much farther in her efforts to "blot out . . . some very disagreeable circumstances" (Correspondence, V, 20, August 12, 1754). In his bibliographical history of Richardson's career, William Sale reminds us that Lady Echlin wrote an emended version of the novel and sent it to Richardson in 1755. Her version was then offered for sale by G. Michelmores and Co. Lady Echlin reformed Lovelace, allowing him to die after a prolonged illness. A scornful Richardson responded that since Lady Echlin had excused Lovelace from the ignominy of seducing the abused Clarissa, she could at least let him live and make him a governor of one of the American colonies.²⁹

A greater amount of comment centered not on the rape but on the tragical ending. An abundance of readers of widely disparate views and circumstances encouraged a "happy ending." A few like John Channing consoled the author that "the desire of having your piece end happily . . . will ever be the test of a wrong head, and a vain mind" (Correspondence, II, 334, October 31, 1748). Among

the "wrong headed" was the novelist Fielding. And Richardson tells us in his Postscript that most women urged a fortunate ending, some even insisting that poetical justice required that Clarissa be made happy, a term whose definition for these critics apparently did not include death.³⁰ So much distress did poor Richardson encounter with readers who, despite his efforts, failed to understand what he was about, that he was prompted to respond not just to critics but to sympathizers as well as the beleaguered respond to succor. To Elizabeth Carter he wrote on December 17, 1748:

You have given me so much pleasure in signifying to me your approbation of my catastrophe . . . I have had infinite trouble and opposition to it . . . from persons . . . who professed so much love to Clarissa, as to deny her her triumph, and to grudge her her Heaven.
(Letters, p. 117)

Most readers could entertain the multitude of afflictions that confront Clarissa with the exceptions of the rape and her death. However, most readers who objected to one also rejected the necessity of the other. Certainly, the melodramatic reaction of Colley Cibber sums up the attitudes of educated but sensitive readers, most of whom perhaps behaved with a bit more decorum in their rejection of Richardson's plan. On June 29, 1745, Laetitia Pilkington wrote to Richardson immediately following her encounter with a distraught Mr. Cibber. Mrs. Pilkington admits that she related to Cibber

not only the catastrophe of the story, but also your truly religious and moral reason for it; and, when he heard what a dreadful lot hers was to be, he lost all patience, threw down the book, and vowed he would not read another line. . . . When I told him she must die, he said, "G-d d--m him, if she should, and that he should no longer believe Providence, or eternal Wisdom, or Goodness governed the world, if merit, innocence and beauty were to be so destroyed. . . ." (Correspondence, II, 127-130)

Faced with such emotional reaction, Richardson felt compelled to explain why the story must go on as it does. He did so piecemeal in his correspondence and in a few publications which presented both critiques of Clarissa and Richardson's typically anonymous replies, notably the already mentioned Albrecht von Haller's article in Gentleman Magazine. The prefaces, tables of contents, footnotes within the text, and the compendium we catalogued served to direct the reader's attention to what Richardson intended him to grasp at that point as well as overall. But finally, Richardson summed up his responses to criticisms in the Postscript attached to the novel. We should note that in all this plethora of defense, Richardson does not contradict himself nor waver from the aims he asserts guided him from the inception of the work.

Concerning the inordinate length of a novel with a relatively simple plot structure, Richardson insists that he had to be "very circumstantial and minute, in order to

preserve and maintain that air of probability . . . in a story designed to represent real life." Wishing to represent real life, Richardson needed to make Clarissa and Lovelace believable, neither too good nor too evil. He insists he did so. To suggestions that Clarissa is too good, Richardson inquired of Lady Bradshaigh, "But I have really made Clarissa what the Woman of . . . Christian Virtue, cannot be?--Surely, I have not. Have you not seen . . . in her the early Saint?" (Letters, October 26, 1748, p. 94). Even so, he admits to having "laid a heavy hand" on Clarissa and revised to clarify her motives for eloping so that she would not seem at fault except in the ill advised decision to meet Lovelace. He began Clarissa's character, he told Miss Mulso, with the elements of the future saint in her and could bring the sanctity to fruition only by intense suffering (Correspondence, III, 181, September 3, 1751).

To objections that Lovelace is surely too charming to be so wicked or that Lovelace is too unrelieved a villain to be believable, Richardson responded that he intended Lovelace's character to be "unamiable" and revised to make him seem so even to soft hearted readers. He tells Aaron Hill (Letters, October 29, 1746, pp. 73-74) and Lady Bradshaigh again two years later (Correspondence, IV, 234, December 15, 1748) of having read to a young lady parts about Lovelace's character and end.

When the girl pitied him and wished he could be made a penitent, Richardson emended his text to make Lovelace more "odious, by his heighten'd Arrogance and Triumph, as well as by his vile Actions, leaving only some Qualities in him, laudable enough to justify her first Liking." Had Lovelace been an infidel, Richardson claims in his Postscript, there would have been no reason for Clarissa or us to have hopes for him and the character would have been reduced from a wealthy, charming, arrogant, but realistic individual to an "utterly abandoned, irreclaimable . . . savage."³¹

In justifying his ending, Richardson took two main approaches. The first and most important to Richardson, of course, is the Christian. He suggests in his Postscript that he has ventured to "investigate the great doctrines of Christianity under the fashionable guise of an amusement." But he does not justify the end only by religion, which he admits is not always a weighty consideration among modern critics. He argues that the tragic poets have seldom made their heroes true objects of pity or have allowed them to anticipate a future reward. Richardson offers both. Furthermore, he draws on ancient authority for his tragic ending, reminding us that the Greeks treasured tragedy because they "found their hearts mended by it" and Horace praises the poet who makes his readers feel passion, pity, and terror. Rapin, he says,

reminds us that tragedy teaches us "not to fear too weakly common misfortunes" and to spare compassion for that which deserves it. Finally, Richardson proposes to make death familiar and Clarissa's so amiable that readers will desire the same end. Indeed, Richardson concludes that he has faithfully answered the requirements of Christian doctrine and of poetic justice as well.³²

Having so carefully dealt with both Christian and secular dilemmas, how was Richardson and how are we to account for the multiplicity of readings and objections that have continually plagued Clarissa? It seems that we must continue to examine the guise in which the same objections Richardson dealt with among his contemporary readers reappear in subsequent readings. Such a perusal will, of necessity, ultimately take us to an investigation of the philosophically transitory circumstance in which readers of Richardson have found themselves encompassed. Unable to free themselves of a sense of vacillation between the Christian and the secular, they are unable to assimilate in a satisfactory way the identical sense of tentativeness in Clarissa. For, however carefully Richardson closed his text, Clarissa nevertheless hovers in that incompatible territory between God's glory and man's glory.

Notes

¹Christianity does not, of course, teach that man is not responsible for the direction of his life. However, with the shift from an emphasis on Ecclesiastes 12:13 ("This is the end of the matter . . . Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.") to Titus 2:11-12 ("For the grace of God hath appeared . . . instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world. . . ."), the distinctions became blurred. Because he moved from direct commandments regulating his behavior to a more general injunction to be good, eighteenth-century man was required to exercise his own judgment far more extensively than men of previous centuries in Judeo-Christian history had been expected to do. Certainly, an admonition to live soberly and righteously is far more nebulous than an order to observe specific commandments.

²William Hazlitt, From "Lectures on the English Poets," in The English Novel: Background Readings, ed. Lynn C. Bartlett and William R. Sherwood (New York: Lippincott, 1967), p. 75.

³In his study of the popular literature of the first half of the eighteenth century, John Richetti asserts that the development of fiction can best be understood if we remember that popular narratives feed upon the prevailing ideologies of the age. Popular fiction, says Richetti, is "essentially opportunistic; it sets out to flatter and exploit rather than to challenge or redefine the assumptions of its implied audience" (p. 263). Richetti claims that Richardson contributes to this preoccupation by refining the scandal novel with its focus on the myth of the "destruction of female innocence by a representative of an aristocratic world of male corruption" (p. 125). John J. Richetti, Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969). Erich Auerbach is not so concerned that literature exploits myths as that it imitates reality. This inclination was enhanced by the spread of Christianity, which Auerbach claims had always been realistic. Not only had "Christ's life among the lower classes and the simultaneous sublimity and shamefulness of his Passion shattered the classical conception of the tragic and the sublime," but Church's realism, certainly as it appears in literary form, goes even further by entering into "practical activity in the practical world." Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953), p. 92.

⁴Donald Greene, The Age of Exuberance: Backgrounds to Eighteenth-Century English Literature (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 92.

⁵Samuel Richardson, Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady, ed. John Butt, 4 (rpt. 1965; London: J.M. Dent, Everyman's Library, 1932). Hereafter cited in the text by volume, letter number, and page number. If we consider Richardson's desire to enforce a Christian closure on Clarissa, Mrs. Norton's statement is perplexing. As Clarissa's primary tutor, Mrs. Norton presides as Richardson's spokesman for Christian doctrine as it should manifest itself in Clarissa's beliefs and actions. Yet, suggesting that she does not know what we should pray for but should passively ask God to do as He will and resign ourselves to the outcome stands in direct conflict with Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, the most succinct pronouncement of the basic tenet of Christianity available and supposedly the cornerstone of Christian doctrine. In that sermon, Jesus addresses the issue of prayer, noting how the Christian should pray and prefacing his sample prayer with the assurance that "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." Couple this lesson with Jesus's later remarks in the same sermon that God cares for the birds and the flowers and, since we are more important than they, God will certainly care for us, and we have to wonder at Mrs. Norton's lack of assurance. Richardson would have affirmed the Sermon on the Mount, but because even he, though perhaps unwittingly, is caught in the tentativeness of the transition from God-ordered to man-ordered society, he reflects through Mrs. Norton an ambivalence of which he was probably not aware. He undermines his efforts to assure a Christian interpretation by invalidating on a practical basis much of the promise of succor Jesus makes in the sermon. Clarissa is not fed, clothed, and cared for as the birds and flowers are. Nor does the reader see a reason not to be fearful for her or for Clarissa to relax her apprehensions even though Jesus adds, "Be not anxious for the morrow" (Matthew 6:8-13, 25-34).

⁶Samuel Johnson, "On Chance," in Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, 1971), p. 143.

⁷Lois A. Sklepowich, "Providential Labyrinth: The Development of Richardson's Christian Comedy," Diss. University of Virginia, 1973, p. 306.

⁸In his correspondence, Richardson indicates that he asked for and accepted (though seldom implemented) suggestions for the shortening and/or revision of Clarissa

from a number of acquaintances. Prominent among these were Aaron Hill and Edward Young, but he also solicited the opinions of such people as Dr. Heylin and his wife, Miss Cheyne (Dr. Cheyne's daughter), the surgeon Mr. Freke, and Sophie Westcomb and her mother. Colley Cibber, after hearing about the tale, asked to see it and offered thoroughly unacceptable suggestions.

⁹At least as early as the end of 1744, Richardson indicated to Edward Young that the novel had grown excessively long. "I have run into such a length!--And am such a sorry pruner, though greatly luxuriant, that I am apt to add three pages for one I take away!" (Letters, p. 61). On January 20, 1746, the author writes to Hill: "Length is my principal Disgust, at present. Yet I have shorten'd much more than I have lengthened" (Letters, p. 63). Still, he struggles with the problem but admits to Hill (October 29, 1746) that Clarissa is too long to publish and he has been unable to shorten half as much as he thinks he needs to. On January 5, 1747, he writes again to Hill that using a very small type and cutting two-thirds of the novel would comprise approximately "Three such Volumes as the Third and Fourth of Pamela," but then he doubts that so short a work can answer all it is meant to. Samuel Richardson, Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Herein and after cited in text as Letters. Asterisks indicate words deleted by Richardson; daggers enclose words added by Richardson in revision.

¹⁰Samuel Richardson, The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, ed. A.L. Barbauld, 6 (London: n.p., 1804), 243-244. Hereafter referred to in the text as Correspondence.

¹¹Frederick W. Hilles, "The Plan of Clarissa," in Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 80-91.

¹²Samuel Johnson, p. 141.

¹³For a full, but compact, survey of the composition, publication, and reception of Clarissa, see T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 205-321. In May 1968, Eaves and Kimpel published an account of Richardson's problems and procedures related to the composition of Clarissa in "The Composition of Clarissa and Its Revisions Before Publication," PMLA, 83 (1968), 416-428.

¹⁴Edgar Allen Poe, "On the Aim and Technique of the Short Story," in What Is the Short Story? ed. Eugene Current-Garcia and Walton R. Patrick (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1961), p. 5.

¹⁵Robert Louis Stevenson, Letter to Sidney Colvin, September 5(?), 1891, in The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, ed. Sidney Colvin, 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 335-336.

¹⁶Eaves and Kimpel discuss the distinction between the "moral" of a book and its "effect": "the 'meaning' of Clarissa is the experience which the reader has while he reads the book. Richardson had various not altogether consistent ideas about what he was doing, but he also had a concept which he could not express adequately in abstract terms but which he conveyed in his characters." Eaves and Kimpel, A Biography, p. 280.

¹⁷Samuel Richardson, "Postscript," Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady, ed. John Butt, 4 (rpt. 1965; London: J.M. Dent, Everyman's Library, 1932), 552.

¹⁸William Sale, Samuel Richardson: A Bibliographical Record (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1936), p. 48. As Sale reminds us, "publication was delayed for more than three years, while Richardson discussed the title-page, the preface, and the revision and shortening of the text with his friends, and while he sought on every hand approval for his tragic ending."

¹⁹While Richardson was characteristically offended by Hill's efforts to help in the revision and shortening of Clarissa, he prevailed upon Hill to try to help, even against Hill's wishes. According to Eaves and Kimpel, Hill objected to shortening much to please Richardson's friends, complaining that the chief effect of revision efforts was often loss of freshness and naturalness of prose. In March of 1746, Hill thinks of marking in the manuscript "many Places, where the timid care that had been taken to improve a Phrase, or an Expression substitutes, sometimes an elegant Propriety, of Stiffness, where before, there shone a native Negligence of undress'd Loveliness, and picturesque Simplicity." Eaves and Kimpel, "The Composition of Clarissa," p. 419. Study of an abridgement Hill made for Richardson shows the difference in Richardson's draft and the published version, according to Eaves and Kimpel. "The language is hardly ever exactly the same and several scenes are almost unrecognizable." The wording is less elevated, and for the sake of propriety, Anna's and Clarissa's remarks about Clarissa's

family are softened and a passage in which Clarissa fears that Solmes is coming to her room is deleted. Eaves and Kimpel, A Biography, p. 210.

²⁰For details of the extent and direction of each kind of change in the second edition, see Shirley Van Marter, "Richardson's Revisions of Clarissa in the Second Edition," Studies in Bibliography, 26 (1973), 107-132.

²¹Sale, Bibliographical Record, p. 53.

²²Sale, Bibliographical Record, pp. 45-64.

²³William C. Slattey, ed., The Richardson-Stinstra Correspondence and Stinstra's Prefaces to Clarissa (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1969), p. 37. Hereafter referred to as "Stinstra."

²⁴Samuel Richardson, "Preface," in Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady: Comprehending the Most Important Concerns of Private Life, and Particularly Shewing the Distresses that May Attend the Misconduct Both of Parents and Children, in Relation to Marriage, 1st ed. (London: n.p., 1748), xi.

²⁵Eaves and Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography, p. 275.

²⁶Albrecht von Haller, "An Account of Clarissa and Richardson's Reply," Gentleman's Magazine, 19 (1749), 138, in Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record, ed. Ioan Williams (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), pp. 130-141. Taken from Bibliothèque raisonnée, 42 (1749), 325 ff. Richardson's reply points the reader's attention to details which should answer the objection from the text itself. "Clarissa has been accused of over-scrupulousness, when in the power of Lovelace, by many of the readers of her story in England, as well as by this gentleman. But, whoever reads with attention, Lovelace's letters to his friend Belford, when he had got her into his power, and considers the artifice which she found he had been guilty of, in order to obtain that power over her, will perhaps, find reason to acquit a person of her character and delicacy. The author, in his second Edition, has endeavored to obviate this objection, by notes on the places. He there observes, that Mr. Lovelace never offers her his hand in such a way, that a Clarissa could accept of it, but once. And her suspension of the day (for it was only a suspension) is then naturally accounted for."

²⁷Eaves and Kimpel, "The Composition of Clarissa,"
p. 420. Aaron Hill to Richardson, October 23, 1746.

²⁸Eaves and Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography,
p. 234.

²⁹William M. Sale, Samuel Richardson: A Bibliographical
Record, p. 63.

³⁰Eaves and Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography,
p. 295. Postscript to Clarissa, Everyman edition, IV, 552.

³¹Postscript to Clarissa, Everyman edition, IV, 564.

³²Postscript to Clarissa, Everyman edition, IV, 560,
563-566.

CHAPTER III
UNAPPEASED EXPECTATION: CRITICAL RESPONSE
TO CLARISSA

In George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil," the first-person narrator, Latimer, chronicles the history of his disillusionment with his beautiful, cold, murderous wife, Bertha, and pinpoints the moment of his final and lingering recognition of and despair at her essence:

The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank, prosaic wall; from that evening forth, through the sickening years which followed, I saw all around the narrow room of this woman's soul.¹

The same recognition and despair are reserved for Clarissa, for Richardson allows her to perceive only gradually what kind of person Lovelace is. But perhaps stating it so confidently is an error, because while "what kind of person Lovelace is" unfolds a bit at a time for Clarissa, and somewhat more expeditiously for the reader, neither Clarissa nor the reader is ever sure just how to define Lovelace, and that which cannot be satisfactorily defined cannot be accurately anticipated. Nor perhaps is it reasonable to expect a sheltered young lady of nineteen, however exceptional, to understand the futility of her expectations

regarding all of her opponents, or the degree to which a man with Lovelace's attitudes and drives may be outside her ken.

Certainly, we as readers have hardly agreed on who and what Lovelace might be. As we have previously investigated, Richardson's earliest references to the novel relate his disappointment at how the character of Lovelace was so readily "misapprehended" by readers and listeners whom he himself chose and could most effectively influence. We can follow his efforts to depict Lovelace as sufficiently evil so that his treatment of Clarissa is in character for him, an evil which readers must acknowledge if they are to avoid admiring the handsome, debonair, self-centered rake. On the other hand, Lovelace cannot be so irredeemably wicked that a Clarissa would never respond to his charms, but would see them immediately as the trappings of the carnivorous male. Nevertheless, despite all his efforts, if Richardson were to read the critics since his death, he would realize that readers, who clearly know more about Lovelace's motivations and interpretations of his relationship with Clarissa than she does, still look all around what is visible of the confines of Lovelace's soul and argue about what they see, about how capacious or circumscribed, how labyrinthine or uncomplex the expanse is, about what the evidence reveals about Lovelace.

An amazing array of critical postures have been assumed in Clarissa studies. By far the greatest number, however, are the efforts to define the characters of Lovelace and Clarissa. The interpretations range from seeing each in relatively simple terms, easily apprehended, to viewing them as precursors of complex modern, fictional developments and preoccupations. By and large, the critical viewpoint taken toward Clarissa is dependent upon the reader's understanding of Lovelace, the force by which every move Clarissa makes can be measured. If one sees Lovelace as comparatively simple and straightforward, then he will likely see Clarissa as a character who is manipulative at worst and at least reactionary. If, on the other hand, Lovelace is devious, manipulative, sadistic, or unprincipled, then Clarissa seems to be much more a victim who cannot gain control over the events that are imposed upon her. Of course, in between the extremes are varieties of interpretation, with degrees of sympathy for one or the other character.

In his 1976 study of the form of eighteenth-century fiction, Melvyn New looks at the roles some major works play in attempting to reflect the tenuous alliance of conflicting world views--the providential and the secular--during a crucial instant of transition and finds in Clarissa "an interior view of motive and action, anticipating the psychological fiction of the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries, which is quite different from the external characterizations of romance."² If New's suggestion is valid and Richardson's work is indeed a significant point in the development of fiction that acknowledges and explores the intricacies of the human mind, then it jars a bit to hear another critic a year later suggest, as Phyllis Klotman does in "Sin and Sublimation in the Novels of Samuel Richardson," that Lovelace is merely a flat character, flatter even than the almost silent Mr. B-- of Pamela. Clarissa's foil, says Klotman, "has a sadistic, one-track mind."³ But surely, the Clarissa we come to know is too bright, too aware of psychological complexities to be unable to discern a narrow meanness and singularity of character. She certainly comprehends her brother's limitations readily enough and shuns contact with him as much as possible, knowing how very restricted James is in his boorishness, self-centeredness and mediocrity. Nor is the reader deceived by James. Very little ink has been used to address the intricacies of James's character, or of any of the other Harlowes, for that matter. After years of critical argument, it would seem impossible to argue convincingly that a character is "simple" to understand.

The character of Lovelace, on the contrary, unfolds gradually and so obliquely that we have not at all been able to agree on what we are watching unfold. Failing to

grasp this, John Preston suggests in The Created Self (1970) that

the novel is meant to be "The History of a Young Lady." It is about Clarissa, about her resistance to Lovelace and all that he represents. It is expected to show the moral impossibility of either compromising with Lovelace or changing his nature. It really is about the dangerous folly of thinking that "a Reformed Rake makes the best Husband."⁴

This seems simple enough and reasonable enough, but deceptively so. It deals with Lovelace as a type, as Klotman does, without defining the man Lovelace, whom we and Clarissa observe in action. The problem posited in the novel is how readily and accurately Clarissa and the reader can determine what Clarissa is facing. For this reason, Preston's frozen conflict is far less convincing than readings by critics who have learned to study Lovelace by examining Clarissa's unfolding knowledge of him and her reactions to him as she receives more and more information.

Initially, the reader's interpretation of Lovelace could coincide with either Clarissa's or her family's. Considering the information available, the only fully justifiable reason for a reader to reflect Clarissa's reservations concerning Lovelace is that the family members have been introduced and the reader already has some reason, although not too much, to value Clarissa's attitudes and value system more highly than anyone else's when

opinions conflict. At first, of course, Lovelace does not appear particularly complex. Indeed, at the outset, Clarissa finds herself alone in viewing Lovelace with reservation, if not disapproval. When Lovelace courts Arabella, Clarissa's sister confesses that Lovelace assumes an air of such gay, lively bashfulness and apparent reverence for his mistress that she is puzzled somewhat by the unpredictability of his behavior (I, II, 6). She vaguely suspects that she has been trapped into sending Lovelace from her in a pique when he meekly accepts her rejection and fails to renew his suit. Likewise, Clarissa's father is initially impressed with Lovelace and suggests that Lovelace's ability to write about and describe the places he has visited shows "him to be a person of reading, judgment and taste" (I, III, 12). From all quarters, Lovelace is recommended to Clarissa as studious, courageous, handsome, respectful, intelligent, and heir to a title. Clearly, in the beginning Clarissa is the only suspicious Harlowe. She perceives him to be haughty, violent, and devious. Not only has he already fought with her brother, but he now encloses unsolicited personal letters in the general correspondence which her family has asked her to undertake with him (I, III, 12). Thus, Richardson establishes in the beginning the dilemma that both Clarissa and the reader must contend with. Lovelace will be revealed gradually and obliquely, forcing

Clarissa and the reader to sift through contradiction after contradiction.

Elizabeth Brophy, in her 1974 study Samuel Richardson: The Triumph of Craft, identifies three divisions of the story which present three separate problems for Clarissa and the reader, problems the remedies for which depend upon what is revealed over the course of time about Lovelace and how that information is interpreted. She must either marry Solmes or resist her family. After her escape from the family with Lovelace, she must decide whether to marry him or attempt to reconcile herself to her family. And, finally, after the rape, Clarissa must decide whether to salvage her reputation and her last chance of a reconciliation with her family by marrying Lovelace or spurn the man who has treated her savagely. Clarissa and the reader must weigh conflicting evidence and make a number of judgments and, ultimately, decisions, none of which is particularly desirable:

As she faces each decision, her knowledge and the reader's knowledge of Lovelace himself is greater; her choices thus becomes [sic] more valid. Richardson carefully uses the flexibility of his new format to control the information available to the reader. By means of this selective knowledge, he manages to secure maximum identification with Clarissa in her dilemma, and while still using dramatic irony to heighten the emotional tension, he tests the moral judgment of the reader--an important tenet of his theory.⁵

In Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist (1960), A.D. McKillop anticipates Brophy's analysis, noting that Richardson's own comments on the character of Clarissa "show that he realized the complexity of the situation, and was ready to look on his heroine not as the mere personification of virtue, but as one perplexed in the extreme. . . ." ⁶ She and the reader are confounded because of their limited knowledge of Lovelace and how he fits their concepts of social correctness. And yet, the didactic Richardson wanted Clarissa and the reader to take an admittedly complex situation and respond in, what seems to us today, a simplistic manner.

One way to examine how Lovelace and Clarissa have been defined by readers is to note how critics have identified the central fictional situation of the novel. Some suggest a power struggle in one of many forms, almost always with Lovelace as the antagonist; some see a quest for selfhood on Clarissa's part, with Lovelace serving as the serious obstacle; and yet other critics insist that the novel presents a coming to terms with Providence and Providential guidance, a process in which Lovelace serves various roles, though chiefly as the hindrance or ultimate test for Clarissa's faith. How readers perceive the fictional situation is important because how we define the conflict that Richardson sets up determines in large part how we respond to the characters Richardson traps within it.

One of the most pervasive and influential points of view in the critical literature on Clarissa suggests that, however it is enveloped in tragedy or Christianity or middle-class economics, what we have ultimately is a profound power struggle. Grasping just how Lovelace serves or uses the circumstance of the struggle will provide Clarissa with her major weapon against her opponent. But always she must learn to define Lovelace accurately. Almost universally, Clarissa is the recognized champion.⁷ However, the critics disagree on the nature of the battle she has won and Lovelace's role in it.

Among those who posit a social order which endeavors to exact its due from a rebellious Clarissa, John Carroll, in the introduction to his collection of critical essays on Richardson's novels (1969), speaks simply of "Clarissa's eventual triumph over the world that tried to bend her to its will."⁸ Other readers have agreed with Carroll that the conflict is between representatives of her socio-economic system and Clarissa, who rebels against her appointed role. For these critics Lovelace, as representative of an opposing value system, is a weapon which members of Clarissa's own group can use to prevail upon her to play out the role they consider her responsible to act. In such an interpretation, Lovelace the individual tends to be lost to Lovelace the class enemy of the Harlowe world. Clarissa's task remains, nevertheless,

one of gradually coming to realize the inherent danger to the social order of her defection to Lovelace. Thus, she must learn what he is and how dishonorable his purposes are from the middle-class point of view.

Christopher Hill, in "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times" (1955), insists that the nature of her society makes it imperative that Clarissa submit to its will, while Lovelace uses this very society and its demands upon her to suit his own ends.⁹ Hill examines the status of women in relation to men within the atmosphere of a thoroughly commercial bourgeois society. What Richardson does in his novel, Hill concludes, is to consider "the effect on individuals of property marriage and all that goes with it" (p. 107). If the existing social order is to be maintained, Clarissa must sacrifice herself to family aggrandizement. Her role is to keep the only marketable goods she has--herself--intact and to marry solely to enhance the capital base of the Harlowe clan. If she marries Solmes, the Harlowe money and property will suitably expand, although it is worth noting that the wealth will be concentrated in the Harlowe heirs, who will, or course, derive from James. Lovelace, Hill notices, is offended by bourgeois efforts to achieve upper class status by training daughters to entrap young men of the aristocracy and is hardly likely to add part of his own estate to that of James. Yet Lovelace too defines marriage in economic terms, for Hill

reminds us that the only time Lovelace comes close to proposing (although dishonestly) to Clarissa, he does so in terms of deeds and handsome settlements, as though the obvious import of her punctilio is that she is holding out for more favorable endowments and property rights.

William Sale in "From Pamela to Clarissa" (1949) suggests that although Clarissa may wish only "for a chance to live life more completely in conformity with an ideal of conduct," the economic demands of her society necessitate a compromise which, if she will not consent to it, must be forced upon her. If she will not be prevailed upon, then she must be eliminated as a threat to the social structure. And, of course, ultimately she is eliminated.¹⁰ However, certain difficulties arise when critics like Sale suggest that Clarissa Harlowe reflects the concept of the individual as a member of society, one who gains value only in terms of how he or she carries out an assigned role within that social milieu. If we summarize the novel so, we find that the full complexity of Lovelace is lost in his role as a social weapon used to ensure Clarissa's submission or remove her threat to social welfare. If he is no more than a weapon to control her, then there was no need for the complications his personality presents. There is no need for the gradual unfolding of schemes and motives that renders Clarissa perplexed and the remaining characters unable to agree on

what role he plays within his own society or the bourgeois. Such an interpretation is also inevitably sympathetic to Lovelace, because it tends to reduce him to a type, despite claims like Hill's that Lovelace is much more complex than a stock character.

In 1966, James Boulton included Clarissa in his study, Arbitrary Power: An Eighteenth-Century Obsession. In this work, Boulton shifts from the problem of economic coercion to look at the structure of the novel as it deals with political power. Richardson, Boulton claims, created Clarissa's persecutors in "explicitly political" terms, suggesting a "concern with arbitrary power . . . organically related to an inclusive vision of man in society."¹¹ Mr. Harlowe sees himself as an arbitrary ruler because he is the wealthy patriarch; likewise, Lovelace defines himself as arbitrary ruler because of his wealth and inherited aristocratic privileges.¹² Sharing Boulton's view, Ian Watt agrees that "the authoritarian nature of the family is what precipitates Clarissa's tragedy," but he goes further by examining the "complicated conflict of class and family loyalties" in which Clarissa is caught.¹³

According to Watt's argument, it is not Solmes, the representative of all that is base in the upstart social class of which the Harlowe family is a product, whom Clarissa must fear most, but Lovelace, who represents the

basest of the upper class. True, Solmes is ugly, boorish, impertinent, and stupid, but he does not threaten the moral world of Clarissa or of her family. On the other hand, Lovelace, the handsome, wealthy, educated, licentious rake, displays, in this reading of the work, so total an antipathy to the moral and social values of the middle class, that is, to the very values that Clarissa is an exemplar of, that liaison with him strikes at the core of her existence. Clarissa is far more threatened by Lovelace than by Solmes, for Solmes at least shares her values while Lovelace seeks to obliterate them, those very values which are at the heart of a middle-class individual's claim to social, economic, and political being. Indeed, so important to its survival is the need to maintain the integrity of the middle-class moral system that, even if one fails to meet the economic criteria, he can still claim to be an integral and honorable member of this social class. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon the individual to underscore the class's value system if he desires to retain membership in it, whether or not he enjoys the riches it has to offer. Its morality commands allegiance without guaranteeing a reciprocal boon. Or, as Dorothy Van Ghent puts it in "On Clarissa Harlowe" (1953), "what Richardson tells his readers is that the middle class, to see an image of what is socially and morally desirable, need not look beyond itself, but will find that image in what it already is."¹⁴

The individual then is, according to this interpretation, a participant, consciously or not, in a power struggle which spills over into the political arena, pitting the middle class in a struggle against the aristocracy for self-definition and self-determination. What Boulton suggests is that Clarissa fails to play her assigned role as any subordinate in economic or political (or military) maneuvers must do; hence, she must be eliminated as a dangerous defect in the system. For the eighteenth-century reader, then, Boulton says,

Richardson did not create in Lovelace a stage villain or a schoolboy (however outsized); the frame of reference that gave him significance was of far greater seriousness. . . . Using ideas and language appropriate to arbitrary power of a political kind, Richardson vividly imagines that power operating on the level of personal relationships produces tragic consequences for the individual who is--as Richardson remarks of Clarissa--above affectation and tyranny; just as it does for societies who succumb to it on the political plane.¹⁵

Critics like Watt and Boulton agree with other sociological readers like Christopher Hill and Arnold Kettle that Clarissa unintentionally causes herself to be locked into a power struggle that her culture mandates she must lose. However, by finding in Lovelace a private assault on her desire to conform to the value system which her society validates, Watt and Boulton and their school are less likely to be sympathetic to Lovelace than readers like Hill. Lovelace is for them not just a representative of

his class, fulfilling the role assigned him; for these critics, Lovelace freely and passionately participates in the conflict with Clarissa, whose ardent embrace of the bourgeois value system threatens Lovelace's own security and identity. Clarissa's challenge is to recognize, despite her limited, often inaccurate information and conflicting clues, that Lovelace is the enemy, the antithesis of all she believes in.

While a number of critics have studied Clarissa's and Lovelace's roles as responsible or irresponsible members of their society, still others have examined how Clarissa and Lovelace conform to literary conceptions of that society and its values, specifically as reflected in Restoration and eighteenth-century drama.¹⁶ In The Adversary Literature: The English Novel in the Eighteenth Century, a Study in Genre (1974), Frederick R. Karl points out that the theatricality and falsity of Restoration drama are symbolic of the novel itself. Indeed, Karl asserts that Richardson's technique, the epistolary method, is designed for theatrical devices--changing shapes and personas, disguises, lies, varied deceptions. According to Karl,

The letter permits, indeed encourages, acting, since the act of writing is comparable in a sense to performing for another without worrying about the spontaneity of reply. One can plan his answer, cross out, shape and reshape--all the qualities of metamorphosis.¹⁷

Earlier, A.D. McKillop had argued that Richardson did indeed reflect in Lovelace, the "cynicism and the fluency of the fashionable libertines" of Restoration comedy and the "lawless egotism common both to the heroes and the villains" of the heroic play.¹⁸ McKillop's statement is significant, for it reminds us that in other literary works, the characteristics displayed by Lovelace have been attributed to both heroes and villains. No wonder Clarissa and the reader are not always sure which he is. Clarissa's relationship with the theater points to the prevalence of ambiguity implanted in dramatic characters by authors who wish to reflect this world as it is.¹⁹ Because anytime we interact with another person, we encounter at least some contradictions, Richardson, who chose to make his characters as realistic as possible, also makes them contradictory at times. He uses the drama most overtly to underscore those ambiguities in Lovelace's character with which Clarissa must deal.

For example, Richardson uses contemporary drama in the novel specifically for the purpose of further confusing Clarissa when she has just about decided without reservation that Lovelace offers her no good whatsoever. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes asserts in Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (1973), in Richardson's view "only the man who will not or cannot feel is irredeemable."²⁰ Clarissa seems to share this view, as most readers

probably would, and did, judging from the number who see, and have seen, Lovelace as much more complex than a simple Satanic archetype. Thus, when Clarissa seems to be coming to the view that Lovelace is indeed a villain, Richardson has Lovelace take her to the theater to see Otway's Venice Preserved. And, as Dussinger points out, the fact that Lovelace appears to be affected by the play is alone sufficient reason for Clarissa to waver and to assume once again that Lovelace can be reformed.²¹

However, both Clarissa and the reader learn that Lovelace's display of sensibility for a theatrical character does not ensure that he will be moved to perceive Clarissa's situation as similar and equally pitiable, despite the possibility that both characters, in Rachel Brownstein's reading (1977), 'are themselves assuming and maintaining specific roles, just as their theatrical counterparts would do, for the duration of their conflict. Lovelace artfully plays the Restoration rake, while Clarissa plays the exemplar, both literary self-images, argues Brownstein, artifacts, words that confine and distort the genuine self. But Richardson sets the stage deliberately this way, according to Brownstein, because in his novel Richardson "plays constantly with questions about the morality of illusions."²²

The metaphor of the stage also plays a critical role in Elizabeth Napier's "'Tremble and Reform': The Inversion

of Power in Richardson's Clarissa" (1975). Napier argues that "one of the most striking patterns of movement in Richardson's novel emerges from repeated alterations in focal points of control," a pattern which is underscored by Lovelace's theatrical technique of controlling the world of illusion to which Clarissa is introduced.²³ We know as the rape nears that Lovelace is fully in control and that Clarissa's problem hereafter will be seeing through the net of illusion that Lovelace will draw around her. The theatrical metaphor not only allows Lovelace to prevail but teaches the reader the danger that Clarissa is in. The illusion gives him the power that is his ultimate goal. Napier examines the scenes in which Lovelace "rescues" Clarissa from her family by having her entrapped and thus frightened out of the garden at Harlowe Place and the sustaining of the entrapment metaphor through the later stages of her confinement by him.

The effectiveness of Lovelace's stratagems is due in part to the intensely private nature of his symbolic scheme. In consistently misrepresenting the nature of the events which occur after Clarissa's escape, Lovelace is staging a huge drama of deceit in which any potentially disrupting symbols must be kept carefully in check. The key which Lovelace employs to effect Clarissa's escape is thus not a symbol (as Clarissa imagines) of her long-awaited liberty, but of Lovelace's oppressive power over her destiny. . . . The visual "framing" effect which is created as Lovelace looks through keyholes and sees Clarissa at prayer emphasizes the unlikelihood of effective resistance to the process which he has set relentlessly in motion.²⁴

The theatrical metaphor does not just provide a framework for Lovelace's deceit, though. Nor does it serve only to heighten the difficulties Clarissa will have trying to discern the recesses of this man's soul. According to Napier, it also serves to define Clarissa's status in the novel. Before the rape, Lovelace directs the action. After the rape, there is a period of respite in which the dramatic progress is arrested and no one retains control. Then Clarissa begins to write the script and to direct Lovelace despite the wayward actor's chafing at his subordination. As Napier describes this dramatic situation, she studies the structure used to present the power struggle between the two opponents. At the time of the rape, Clarissa suddenly sees all around the narrow room of Lovelace's soul and realizes as well that he will never understand the nature or expanse of her soul--whereupon she steals from him his weapon of illusion and uses it not so much to control him as to prevent his regaining control of her. Says Napier,

During the strange vacuum-like interlude following the rape . . . power seems momentarily to be neutralized. Then, as Clarissa gains spiritual strength in her tragedy, the images slowly, deliberately revolve to the counterpoint of their former positions. . . . From this point in the novel, Clarissa's growing power slowly drains Lovelace of his potency and finally precipitates his death. A striking evidence of Clarissa's widening authority is her ability to enter into Lovelace's domain and assume control over former symbols of his power (most

notably, the images of government and royalty, of drama and of the serpent). By usurping Lovelace's command of plot, point of view, and narrative structure, Clarissa effects a perfect inversion of the formal pattern of the novel.²⁵

With Napier, we have moved, through the theatrical metaphor, away from reading the central conflict in Clarissa as a socio-economic one, and toward the view of Lovelace as the blocking agent for Clarissa's struggle toward selfhood (awareness, wisdom), however that self is defined. The readings in this mode tend to find both characters, Lovelace no less than Clarissa, complex, difficult to comprehend, difficult to anticipate. Seeing them both as self-defining individuals also tends to make a reader less sympathetic to each character's position as he assigns them responsibility for being what they are and doing what they do.

The degree of control of which Napier speaks is a long time coming for Clarissa, prompting critics to wonder just why it takes her so long. Not all readers would agree that Clarissa is blameless or even that she handles herself particularly well, although, as we have noted, Richardson took pains to have her thought as nearly blameless as possible. To this end, he blackened Lovelace's character to make Clarissa seem all the more pushed into her entrapment, with no other recourse available. The danger in such efforts is the possibility of creating a character who is a paragon, an angel, too unrealistically

good to be the example to her sex that Richardson intended her to be, and that she earnestly wants to be. Which posture a reader assumes toward Clarissa's growth obviously contributes to determining how blameable he finds Lovelace to be; and the converse is, of course, equally true.

Recent critics continue to debate just how good Clarissa is. Frederick Garber, in "Richardson, Rousseau, and the Autonomy of the Elect" (1978), can still insist that we have in Clarissa Harlowe Richardson's "tragedy of the paragon."²⁶ While most would hesitate to agree completely with this view, the vast majority of readers still do see her as exceptionally good; only a few call her self-righteous and proud. At any rate, it is important to determine whether Lovelace and the reader are dealing with a paragon, or with a person capable of making errors in judgment, of being stuffy or proud, frightened or confused. What kind of person Clarissa is also determines how she will conduct her struggle with Lovelace and her relatives, how readily she will comprehend what kind of person Lovelace is, and what uses she will make of that knowledge once she gains it. It might even suggest what it is that Lovelace finds most disturbing in Clarissa, her purity or her pride.

According to Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Richardson's "art exposes the uncomfortable fact, for its author, that Clarissa's moral nature unfits her to cope with situations

that less admirable characters would have made short work of."²⁷ A glance at Diderot's well-known musing that it would be interesting to see how the spirited Anna Howe would handle Lovelace, since she is a better match for him than the too-gentle Clarissa, reminds us that the suggestion of a livelier, less scrupulous combatant is not only not new, but that the novel lends itself to the suggestion.²⁸ In his section on Richardson in his 1959 study of Five Masters, Joseph Wood Krutch voices such a view when he suggests that Richardson gave Clarissa "no positive or active virtues, nor even, indeed, any personality. She is no more than a slightly idealized portrait of the conventional 'nice' girl of the period and the whole course of her life is determined by negative principles."²⁹ She refrains from committing sins, which implies passive restraint of one's passions, as opposed to active assertion of good over evil.

Opposed to Krutch's "nice girl," and even earlier, the "persecuted maiden" of Mario Praz's The Romantic Agony (1933), Rachel Brownstein's view seems far more valid.³⁰ Brownstein's assessment is that Clarissa "is no more all diaphanous spirit than he [Lovelace] is all uncivilized animal. Both are human, which to Richardson means that both are deeply, uncomfortably committed to illusory and inadequate forms."³¹ Such a reading puts to rest the simplistic "nice girl" and "persecuted maiden" motifs

and rebuffs as well Dorothy Van Ghent's equally sexist notion that Clarissa is "the love goddess of the Puritan middle class of the English eighteenth century . . . pure . . . yet to be violated." Violated she must be by "Lucifer," "the prince of evil," "one of the damned" because she is "a paragon of virtue."³² Movement away from interpreting Clarissa and Lovelace as stereotypes opens the possibility of criticizing them as individuals who are neither perfect nor irreclaimable.

In Clarissa's case, to be sure, readers sometimes object to her very goodness. McKillop, for instance, says of Clarissa that

Her character, in short, is such that unless one should be hunting for faults, scarce any can be found; and perhaps it is owing to such a disposition in me, that I cannot help observing that she is rather too good, at least too methodically so. The division of her time and her diary had been better omitted; all such things detract from the nature and simplicity of a character.³³

The complaint here seems to be really more against Richardson's technique than against Clarissa. His desire to draw an exemplar to her sex led Richardson, an inordinately intrusive author, to include such possibly dispensible minutiae as the allocation of her time and charitable pursuits and the maintenance of her diary. However, as R.F. Brissenden argues in Virtue in Distress (1974), perhaps Clarissa must be exceptionally good to be the heroine of a sentimental novel, the genre which

Richardson chose to realize his didactic intentions-- although the argument might be considered a circular one. Characters in sentimental novels suffer, says Brissenden, because they are virtuous, because "virtue invites its own punishment."³⁴ The sentimental novel pits good against evil, allowing evil a victory which ultimately rings hollow compared to the moral victory the sentimental author asserts for the wronged virtuous. The consolation for the victim of evil is a knowledge that he, or far more often she, retained her virtue despite adversity; likewise, the justification the author offers the reader for the suffering he allows the virtuous to endure is assurance that virtue will eventually be recompensed in future rewards if not secular status. This last assurance is not to be disregarded in a middle-class society which values reputation as much as it does wealth or title or any other criteria of middle-class success. Thus, Richardson is justified, according to Brissenden, in allowing Clarissa to value the strength of her virtue. So, says Brissenden, Clarissa

draws strength . . . by reflecting on her own virtue. She is saved by "the pride of conscious worth," "the consciousness of deserving well," the sense that she is "innocent" while her enemies are "guilty." It is this that nerves her resistance and enables her to "despise the power of her oppressor." We can take this sort of language from Clarissa, because we know that both she and Lovelace, by exhausting and painful examination of their own characters which

their terrible situation has forced them to undergo, have earned the right to deliver a moral judgment not only on themselves but on other people as well.³⁵

If Brissenden's reading is accurate, then not only can Richardson's heroine rest assured that she is innocent and right, in the main at least, she can know also that she has fulfilled the social purpose of reinforcing the divine doctrine that good is eventually rewarded, that in fact it is its own reward. Therefore, even within the novel, Clarissa herself copes with her distress by reflecting that the story of her sufferings (which her detailed, written meditations guarantee the world will know) might serve as an example to the world. Brissenden even goes so far as to assert that Richardson needed to stress this element because "only by insisting that the main purpose of his pathetic stories was a moral one [did Richardson . . . justify, both to himself and his readers, the anguish he made them all suffer."³⁶

The converse to the argument that Clarissa is a paragon of virtue, or at least close to being one, is the argument that Lovelace is an unrelieved villain. The result is the same flatness of interpretation that we saw in the socio-economic readings, where either character was seen only as a type for a social or economic struggle.

The type here, for example, may be the devil of the Puritan myth who opposes the pure angel of innocence, at least in the scheme of Dorothy Van Ghent.³⁷ In her interpretation,

it is not necessary to recognize any degree of good or worth in Lovelace as an individual. She calls Lovelace "the lover as narcissist, as voyeur, as sadist--all abstractionists."³⁸ Though more negative and damning of Lovelace, Van Ghent's view is not really appreciably different from Klotman's argument, already noted, that Lovelace is a flat, sadistic character. The net result of such a position, as stated above, is to leave the reader wondering why Clarissa is confused by Lovelace if she is indeed as perceptive and as mature as she is presented in the novel and if Lovelace is as evidently the spirit of evil as a critic like Van Ghent sees--or better, why it is that so few readers have been willing or able to follow Van Ghent's extreme position.

But if we move away from this extreme position, we find that it most often entails a concomitant increase in one's criticism of Clarissa. Once we take Clarissa as less than a paragon we enter into the possibility of her behavior serving as a negative example; she is both a tragic heroine and a flawed human being, and as we tend toward the view that Lovelace has some redeeming qualities, we tend to stress the flaws over the heroics in Clarissa. In his 1968 book Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel, Ira Konigsberg suggests that the inherent conflict in these two aims "perhaps explains the reader's ambivalence toward Clarissa throughout the work; though Richardson

intends her as a model of virtue, the heroine certainly does not seem wholly blameless for her misfortunes."³⁹

In fact, according to Erich Kahler in The Inward Turn of Narrative (1973), this incompatible combination robs Clarissa of her humanity and renders her a "narrow-minded and unfeeling" automaton. Even at the end, says Kahler, in a remarkably obtuse reading, Clarissa remains

as slavishly subject as ever to the authority of her family and bourgeois convention. Not even utmost suffering can bring about true release into a realm of pure humanity ("no terror can make her forget her punctilio") . . . she remains the stern governess of her lover, she forgives him out of Christian duty, but not from the heart, and his wild repentance, his longing for atonement, leave her completely cold. She has not the slightest inkling of what goes on in his mind and heart.⁴⁰

Such a charge is serious, indeed, for it indicates that for some readers, at least, Richardson totally undercuts his heroine and his own didactic efforts. If Kahler were correct, however, then Richardson's perception of Clarissa's world is quite subverted and Lovelace is the "innocent" victim of a cold, inhuman stereotype of middle-class respectability. Again we must return to how a reader might perceive Lovelace in order to interpret Clarissa. The more innocent the reader thinks Lovelace is, the more likely he will be to find fault with Clarissa, and ultimately this leads to absurdity. Richardson realized, of course, that Lovelace could charm his readers

and many of the 429 footnotes that he writes serve precisely to warn readers not to believe what Lovelace has just said, since a quick reference to a previous letter will remind them that this is yet another ploy to entrap a confused and frightened Clarissa. Even so, some readers continue to insist that Lovelace's only flaw is a penchant for sexual impropriety. McKillop pretty well sums up such an interpretation when he says that Richardson insists that Lovelace is no freethinker or atheist and, of course, has him display an admirable degree of generosity and sense of social propriety. Therefore, in his effort "to keep Lovelace in the same universe of discourse with Clarissa, to salvage his humanity," Richardson undercuts Lovelace's danger to Clarissa, according to McKillop, by limiting "Lovelace's vice to the one matter of sexual morality," an effort which "strikes the modern reader as particularly weak."⁴¹

But the conflict between Lovelace and Clarissa is far more complex than a mere sexual chase, and even if it were not, Clarissa's refusal to capitulate and forfeit the power struggle to Lovelace hardly confirms Kahler's ludicrous appraisal of the situation. Rachel Brownstein's analysis seems far more to the point:

Lovelace is attractive because he is artful, good at managing appearances; he seems to us worthwhile, worth saving. Not Lovelace the Restoration rake, but Lovelace the Romantic hero, a complex man of satanic drives, real sensibility

and creative egotism, interests us most, and perhaps it is right as well as generous to suggest that it is he who also attracts the fascinated virgin Clarissa.⁴²

What we have to be able to comprehend is that a character can be complex and nonetheless quite evil, can be complex, and nonetheless, quite good. Critics who find in Clarissa or Lovelace a simplistic type clearly misread the conflict between them, one that the characters themselves find most complex. But to decide that complexity of character is the same as a moral confusion or worse, moral justification, in the character is perhaps to fall directly into the trap that Richardson sets--certainly a common enough eighteenth-century invitation to moral error. Everywhere, the reader must be on guard: he may be seduced by Lovelace, threatened by Clarissa, manipulated by the one and bullied by the other. After all, Kahler and Brownstein are not alone in articulating an infatuation with Lovelace, a willingness to see him not as Richardson endeavored to paint him, but as we might like him to be. Like Clarissa, we tend to confuse the complexity of Lovelace's character with an inability to know him; like Clarissa, and if we are good readers, perhaps before Clarissa, we come to realize that all of the complexity leads to the same evil, the same narrowness, the same unrelenting need to define himself at the expense of Clarissa's own selfhood. But this is a perception many readers continue to avoid.

In Samuel Richardson: The Triumph of Craft (1974),

Elizabeth Brophy articulates her view of Richardson's problem with reader interpretation:

At the end of the novel, Richardson goes to some lengths to make it clear that Clarissa's conduct has been correct; she is indeed exemplary. Her only error, in fact, has been her original attraction to Lovelace, an attraction that has been shared by the reader, and that her misguided family made disastrous. Clarissa judges herself more harshly than anyone else would, and in losing self-respect she loses her will to live.⁴³

The obvious corollary of this is that she also judges Lovelace more harshly than most others would and is perhaps too inflexible in her refusal to negotiate with him on his own terms. Some readers are so seduced by Lovelace that they fail to acknowledge the extent of his emotional handicaps. Ian Watt even suggests that Lovelace eventually comes to love Clarissa, an interpretation which dismisses the fact that the power struggle can be defined in a number of ways, as we have seen, but most assuredly not in terms of genuine love, affection, and respect between two individuals.⁴⁴ The attempt to see Lovelace as loving is the result of defining complexity as ambiguity; but for Richardson, it is quite possible for him to have tried to paint a complete a portrait of unredeemed evil as he could. Milton's Satan, despite Blake, is not an ambivalent portrait, albeit a highly complex one.

Kahler, who consistently remains Clarissa's harshest critic, utterly repudiates any notion that Clarissa is too good, is indeed a paragon. One almost wonders whether Kahler read only the first edition of the novel, or, having read a later edition, ignored the preface, table of contents, postscript, and footnotes. For he clearly deposits his sympathies with Lovelace, despite Richardson's efforts to the contrary. Not only does he agree with McKillop, that her goodness is so extreme as to border on rigidity, thereby detracting from the impression she ought to give of simple, unaffected virtue, but he, unlike most other critics, agrees as well with Ian Watt that ultimately Lovelace comes truly to love Clarissa. In fact, Kahler blames her for her suffering, which is the logical conclusion to draw, if you reduce the struggle between Lovelace and Clarissa, as Kahler does, to a confrontation between a rake and a prude. Thus, Kahler asserts:

Of course Clarissa is innocent, as far as her will is concerned, of all the cruelties she is subjected to. But not as far as her nature is concerned, for she is by no means an angel. Her pure will partakes of the Harlowes' haughty obstinacy; Lovelace is right when, in a fit of rage and despair, he calls her a true daughter of the Harlowes. This obstinacy, this integral severity, this remarkable lack of feminine gentleness and feminine susceptibility on the one hand keeps her from succumbing to the seducer, but on the other hand, spurs Lovelace's savage instincts to

the utmost. The encounter between these two persons is initially nothing more than a crude and in fact obscene meeting between a lecher and a frigid governess. But the resulting psychological entanglement is harrowing to both their natures. Clarissa's frigidity is melted by suffering, and Lovelace actually arrives at a real, purified love. Despite all of his sinfulness, despite his base intrigues and acts of violence, he is fundamentally more human than she.⁴⁵

Readings such as Kahler's suggest what happens when Clarissa is removed from any eighteenth century context, from any possibility that an author might have some intention in writing the way he does. And it opens a Pandora's box of possibilities where the ingenuity or the misreading of the critic becomes an exercise in imagination rather than recovery. Some of the readings are interesting, I suppose, especially insofar as they reveal something about the critics who write them. Unfortunately, they tell us little about Richardson's attempt to create an enduring monument of art, and as old-fashioned as the view might be, it really might be worthwhile to treat the work as if it had an author who had a purpose.

All this is by way of introducing the most imaginative essay yet written on Clarissa, that by Judith Wilt in PMLA (1977). Here Wilt identifies both Clarissa and Lovelace as victims of "the house of women." Because he shares with women the domination-by-submission propensity, Lovelace is victimized by them, says Wilt. Granted, Lovelace claims Polly and Sally as his victims because

he seduced them, thus delivering them permanently to the "house of women," the brothel. But they first used him by enticing him into that seduction. Indeed, Wilt suggests that Lovelace is victimized by Clarissa because she uses him without feeling any duty to him at all. She intends to use him as a temporary shelter until she can return to the shelter of her father's house and the filial relationship.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Wilt stops short of seeing Lovelace as the innocent and Clarissa as the manipulator of the two. Lovelace, in fact, exposes her to a definition of women that has been heretofore outside her ken and that his pathological anxieties lead him to force on her. She is driven into the experience because she has already been victimized by the "house of men" (Harlowe Place) and because she is subconsciously fascinated by the possibility that Lovelace might offer a different image of men. Thus, says Wilt,

Exposed to Lovelace's reification-deification of her, disdaining it, yet in a subconscious way caught by it (a father-daughter relationship remembered, though sublimated), Clarissa bolts the house of men for the house of women. . . . There she learns the major lesson Lovelace has prepared for her, that the house of women is properly a brothel, that the heart of darkness is there, cruelty without compunction. There woman is a harpy that feeds on the flesh not only of men but especially of innocent women. Rather than be woman as she is visualized here, one must reasonably choose to be dead.⁴⁷

Lovelace is, then, in a secondary position as villain, from Wilt's point of view. The real duel is between Sinclair and Clarissa. Belford points this out to Lovelace: "Such an adorer of virtue to be sacrificed to the vilest of her sex, and thou their implement in the devil's hands. . . ." ⁴⁸ We have come about as far as we can in redeeming Lovelace, and, perhaps significantly, it takes the shape of finding "redeeming social value" in the rapist, who is only a hopeless victim in the struggle of women against women. Not only is the psychology and the sociology of Wilt's essay highly dubious, but its relation to the book Richardson wrote seems only perverse.

The third basic view of the conflict between Clarissa and Lovelace proceeds along far more traditional lines--too traditional perhaps. The providentialists, Lois Sklepowich, Mary Poovey, and John Dussinger, while not denying that Clarissa is beset by external and unreasonable pressures, interpret her dilemma as largely of her own making because her most serious enemy is pride. Their readings are concerned primarily with tracing the depths to which her pride leads her, identifying the moment and circumstances of her epiphany when she finally realizes that she has exhibited a sinful pride, and both noting and justifying the resolution of the dilemma that her pride gets her into.

This view of Clarissa as a suffering religious had, of course, been anticipated before the providentialists. Van Ghent, for example, compares Clarissa to Job, "a perfect and upright man,"⁴⁹ and John Carroll, in his 1973 article on "On Annotating Clarissa," points out, and rightly so, that Richardson certainly believed he had discovered for us another Jobean vision.⁵⁰ However, the providentialists eschew the supposition that within Clarissa's well-ordered world a virtuous individual is likely to suffer so monstrosly on all fronts with no worldly deliverance available, and endeavor to determine in what ways Clarissa could possibly be responsible for her misery. These critics reject the notion that Clarissa is a modern day Job and worry about how Clarissa's unchristian pride leads to her problems.

Here again, the providentialists were anticipated by earlier critics. According to Ian Watt and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, for example, one way in which Clarissa's pride manifests itself is in her assumption that she can change Lovelace through her own virtuous example. Says Watt,

Clarissa eventually comes to realize that she fell into Lovelace's power because of her spiritual pride, which led her to believe "that I might be an humble means in the hands of Providence to reclaim a man who had, as I thought, good sense enough at bottom to be reclaimed."⁵¹

Kinkead-Weekes refines this view by asserting that, specifically, Clarissa believed in her own power, in the

power of her love to overcome Lovelace's "destructive brutality." Realizing her error, Clarissa, in her new-found humility, "will renounce all such hopes in victory over herself, not abasement before her 'conqueror.'"⁵²

The providentialists who accuse Clarissa of the sin of pride tend to insist that she exhibits that flaw most evidently in her relationship with God rather than in her relationship with the other characters in the novel. These critics argue that Clarissa's recognition of her own pride and motivations constitutes the significant action. Some readers attempt as Frederick Karl does to define her sinful pride. Karl sees her punishment of herself, her family, and Lovelace as an urge to be avenged for the wrongs they have done her.⁵³ The providentialists generally tend, however, to be concerned with what she learns about herself and what God expects of her as she becomes conscious of her pride. Such critics as Mary Poovey and Lois Sklepowich are particularly adamant about Clarissa's "pride of presumption and excessive self-reliance."⁵⁴ They object to the character's belief that she can resolve her difficulties and that she knows and can control her heart. Passivity is precisely what Clarissa has to learn and what her sufferings ultimately teach her. As Mary Poovey says in "Journeys from this World to the Next: The Providential Promise in Clarissa and Tom Jones" (1976), once Clarissa realizes that she must

be submissive to God's will, she approaches perfection. As the narrative weight shifts from Clarissa, to Lovelace, and finally to Belford, "the reader is redirected from Clarissa's response to her situation to the details of her mortification and liberation."⁵⁵ Poovey identifies the goal of Clarissa's recognition as the acquisition of a capacity for absolute passivity.

For, in a universe discontinuous with,
but set in motion and governed by God,
any action or exertion of will constitutes a defiance of providence.
True piety can thus be expressed only
through perfect passivity.⁵⁶

An important distinction that Poovey makes is that while what we are watching in Clarissa is her movement toward perfection, Clarissa is not merely a parable, "for the accessibility of the solution she enacts depends upon Richardson's relation of the absolute perfection she attains to the temporal reality from which she emerges."⁵⁷

In her 1973 dissertation, "Providential Labyrinth: The Development of Richardson's Christian Comedy," directed by Martin Battestin, Lois Sklepowich anticipates Poovey's argument that Clarissa's trials are designed to teach her passivity and utter reliance on God to direct and deliver her. However, Sklepowich detects a more negative, damning flaw than Poovey sees resulting from Clarissa's pride. She claims that Clarissa is not just complacent and unduly self-reliant. Indeed, Sklepowich attempts to demonstrate that Clarissa possesses a

"mistrustful attitude towards providence" for which she is punished by the persecutions of her family and by the rape, after which Clarissa slowly perceives the necessity of depositing all her faith in God and relinquishing any control she might try to attain over her situation. Pre-sumption of her own power (which turns out to be non-existent), despair and impatience with anyone else's (including God's) ability or attempts to alleviate her sufferings are all fatal errors Clarissa makes.⁵⁸

Sklepowich obviously disagrees with critics who insist that Richardson sees his heroine as perfectly blameless. Having been taught by Mrs. Norton and Dr. Lewen to do what is good and leave the consequences to providence, Clarissa is held by the author more culpable and therefore appropriately not allowed to be saved by grace after her fall.⁵⁹

Thus, Sklepowich asserts that Richardson's heroine cannot receive God's guidance and aid until she recognizes, assumes, and acknowledges her newly achieved passivity and helplessness. She must learn that she has no power to help herself

in any morally appropriate way and thus she should rely upon providence--i.e., remain totally passive. . . . The point of the conduct-book debate about the respective rights of parents and children in courtship underlying this section of Clarissa is not . . . to allow us to decide whether or not Clarissa should have obeyed her parents

or run away, but to create a perfect impasse in which no human action could or should have been taken.⁶⁰

Clarissa should never have been the main actor in the struggle; God should have been and ultimately is, when Clarissa retreats from either active attack or defense and allows God not just to assist but to direct. As Kinkead-Weekes reminds us, she must learn that "victory is not won, but given, and God is the protagonist."⁶¹ We know that Clarissa has learned her lesson when she admits that a happiness, serenity, and clarity of understanding are gifts of God when He "dies away in us . . . all human satisfaction, in order to subdue his poor creatures to Himself" (IV, CIII, 299).

Thus, the providentialists end up being as hard on Clarissa as those who redeem Lovelace at her expense. And again, the extremity of outcome suggests the interpretation is seriously flawed. For whatever else we might want to say about Richardson's novel, it is clear that our sympathy is with Clarissa, that we do not in any way condemn her unless driven to do so by the perversity of our interpretations. My point is, after all, quite simple. I believe we must reject any interpretation that attempts to see either Clarissa or Lovelace as simplistic embodiments of good and evil, or of any other abstractions. And I believe we must equally reject any interpretation that attempts to find in the complexity of character, or of

some construct surrounding character, an inversion of the most basic response the reader has to the work, namely, that Lovelace is bad and Clarissa is good. What is required is an interpretation of Clarissa that preserves both the complexity of Richardson's inventiveness and the clarity of his moral universe.

A beginning toward such an interpretation was made in 1979 by Ramona Denton in "Anna Howe and Richardson's Ambivalent Artistry in Clarissa." Denton argues that the didactic framework Richardson provides simply cannot contain the entire fictional world of Clarissa. The reader, says Denton, is aware that Clarissa's world is larger than a wholly Christian reading allows, for, in the novel, what we encounter is a dramatization of Clarissa's and Anna's struggles for selfhood and the dangers inherent in that quest.⁶² For Denton, Richardson's use of Anna Howe as a foil for Clarissa serves to underscore the inadequacy of the social world which Richardson so vividly illustrates to provide a nurturing atmosphere for growth of the self. Anna the rebel really is afraid to flaunt social propriety. She always clings to safety. Clarissa the proper is far more willing to risk her social security to retain what she defines as her moral security. Clarissa wants to synthesize society's demands and her rights to protect her personal integrity, which means to Clarissa the right to choose to do that which she believes

is right both morally and for her as an individual when her judgment conflicts with the desires of those to whom she owes fealty. Given the prudent course of marrying Lovelace or suffering ostracism, Anna would choose to marry, despite all her advice to Clarissa to rebel against her parents. Clarissa is willing to adhere to her moral rather than a social code and, thereby, expose herself to the vulnerability that comes with taking complete responsibility for her decisions deriving from internal rather than external sanctions.⁶³

According to Denton, Richardson raises a number of issues whose ramifications frighten him. This occurs apparently because Richardson has indeed created his fictional situation honestly, attempting to allow it to unfold as it must. However, he has provided a social and Christian framework that faithfully reflects what he sees as accurate and desirable but which somehow does not contain his story. Too many problems go unresolved, though surely Richardson endeavored far more openly and directly than so many authors to eliminate confusion in the reader's mind about the conclusions he should draw about Clarissa and her end. Still, the issues and their ramifications assert themselves, according to Denton, who argues that the problems Richardson creates

are psychological as well as social and moral, but he keeps the social and the moral in an uneasy balance, and he cannot admit to himself the full extent

of his novel's psychological complexities. . . . Anna is willing to curb her desires in order to enhance her security, but Richardson does not approve of her position: he respects Clarissa's efforts to realize herself as a woman, but he is frightened by the implications of her autonomy. Furthermore, he seeks to minimize the role of sexual attraction in Clarissa's behavior, and yet the logical outcome of her strength and integrity of will is the necessity of coping with personal desires. Richardson wants to protect his heroine, but in so doing he comes dangerously close to an authorial censorship of her passions as restrictive as that of the Harlowes. The reader realizes . . . that the world of Clarissa is larger than the didactic framework Richardson imposes upon it.⁶⁴

Frederick Garber, in "Richardson, Rousseau, and the Autonomy of the Elect" (1978), also believes that Clarissa is concerned with autonomy of the self, but he seems to define the heroine's efforts in negative terms, seeing Clarissa reacting rather than acting. In looking for a sheltered place for privacy and autonomy, Clarissa moves to progressively smaller enclosures but never attempts utterly to escape society. She simply wants a situation in which the society with which she must deal acknowledges her autonomy and, thus, at least implicitly, her right to it.⁶⁵ Garber insists that Clarissa's repeated offers to remain single are not particularly sacrificial because she wants to be "a free and open spirit" and clearly sees marriage as a frightening usurpation of a woman's right to live her life as she wishes.⁶⁶ Clarissa

shudders at the prospect of marriage:

To be given up to a strange man; to
be ingrafted into a strange family;
to give up her very name, as a mark of
her becoming his absolute and dependent
property. . . . How miserable the life,
if to be called life! (I, XXXII, 153)

Garber agrees with Denton that Clarissa's ideal circumstance is the right to be "an independent, self-sufficient system which is not isolated from society but perfectly meshed with the social scheme that surrounds it."⁶⁷

Clarissa's ideal does not preclude marriage, sex, or any other social interaction but does demand that they conform to the moral restrictions of the individual involved rather than to a social code that requires a woman to be sacrificed to family aggrandizement or to be married off to her rapist.

When Clarissa realizes that her world consists only of inadequate enclosures that thwart her desires to be controlled by her own moral sense, she finds her way out, according to Garber, by embracing death.⁶⁸ Such an argument rejects Richardson's own suggestion that she seeks to be with her Heavenly Father and the providentialists' assertion that she has gradually been taught to turn her thoughts from the safety of her own integrity to a yearning to be with God. Like Denton, Garber is suggesting that the didactic framework Richardson provides fails to offer an adequate explanation for her

death. It seems, instead, that Clarissa has literally gone as far as she had to go to assert her right to make her own moral decisions. It seems appropriate to recall a point that Brissenden makes in his discussion of sentimental heroines. These women are, he says, prepared to do whatever is necessary to preserve their independence of spirit, to protect their right not to do as they please but to be what they like, to define themselves and their individual, personal integrities. In Clarissa's case, the heroine has to give up assertion of her dignity and independence or die because, while she can triumph spiritually, the right she is asserting can be overpowered. Such is the inherent weakness of virtue. It can be defeated by the world.⁶⁹

Since about 1974, there has been a critical movement, which only in the last few years has begun to proliferate (though the providentialists are notable exceptions), toward seeing Clarissa in a historical perspective, as New does when he argues that Clarissa anticipates later psychological fiction. These critics accept Clarissa's goodness and Lovelace's wickedness and attempt to discover what Richardson's dilemma tells us about the world view he offers. Leo Braudy, in "Penetration and Impenetrability in Clarissa" (1974), contends that the novel "marks a transition in literature from theatrical and satiric definitions of character--character apprehended from

without--to fictional character--character apprehended from within."⁷⁰

As Braudy suggests, Clarissa enters the action of the novel (as, I would suggest, does the reader, even the disillusioned and insecure modern reader) believing that there are certain social forces--family bonds and social values--that guarantee a personal security for her within her world. What she and the reader discover is that she has made a moral judgment that Richardson's fictional world does not validate. She must look elsewhere for security. Reasoning with her foes fails. The legal system offers her no real recourse. The family fails her. No relationship with a man offers Clarissa any form of security. She is forced inward, says Braudy, and there she finds that she must write her own definition. The world Clarissa lives in offers few guides for one who searches for personal identity and clings to personal integrity. For Clarissa, that search becomes a process of gradually relinquishing previous forms of definition.⁷¹

Clearly, the social forms Richardson provides fail Clarissa, who then must look toward a world that will allow autonomy and security. However, the sense that we have from Clarissa's struggle is not that she is moving toward security but away from insecurity and chafing restrictions. As Braudy envisions Clarissa's efforts,

the true self, as she defines it, is a purging of the external world. . . . In order to achieve true singularity, there can be no ambivalence, no past vacillations. Each step along the way to Clarissa's self-willed death is a sloughing away of the snakeskin of some past self.⁷²

Toward the end of her life, Clarissa writes in her will, "I am nobody's." Likewise, Braudy notes, she leaves instructions that she be left unviolated: "The occasion of my death not admitting of doubt, I will not, on any account, that it be opened; and it is my desire that it shall not be touched but by those of my own sex" (IV, CXLVI, 416). No sense that another world to come can resolve the problems presented by this world exists for many readers of Clarissa. As Braudy bluntly asserts, "Clarissa's world is a dead end, and the only thing to do is quickly to get out of it."⁷³

We err when we try to reduce our discussions of Clarissa to how blameable Clarissa is or to how much she over-reacts to Lovelace, who is more misdirected than evil. Richardson leaves no debate here. Clarissa is good. Lovelace is wicked. But they are complex creations living in a complex world. For Richardson, Clarissa's problem was a moral one. Her choices seemed to him to be limited and predictable. For readers, the problem is that the issues seem too complex to be fully resolved by dispatching her neatly off to her Heavenly Father and doling out a healthy measure of poetic justice to her enemies.

Notes

¹George Eliot, "The Lifted Veil," in Miscellaneous Essays: Impressions of Theophrastus Such from George Eliot's Works, ed. Esther Wood (New York: Doubleday, 1901), pp. 459-460.

²Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction," PMLA, 91 (1976), 240. For New, Clarissa and Lovelace need to be revealed in all their psychological complexities in order to underscore the difficulties that eighteenth-century intellectuals experienced in trying to mold individuals to fit a structured world. "Man," New suggests, "is the disorderly element in an ordered world . . ." (p. 230). In Chapter II above, we considered Richardson's interest in an intellectual, sophisticated audience as opposed to a provincial, less socially vibrant and aware readership.

³Phyllis R. Klotman, "Sin and Sublimation in the Novels of Samuel Richardson," College Language Association Journal, 20 (1977), 368. Essentially, Klotman seems to perceive Richardson's characters not as individuals but as mannequins which allow the Puritan author to linger "over the sensual aspects of seduction, thereby sublimating or deflecting his own sexual drives" (p. 366). While this observation has some validity, Dorothy Van Ghent made the point much better, much earlier in reminding us that what Richardson actually presents as sexual myth is the rendering of Clarissa into the model of perfection: the dead, sexless daughter, whose exposure to sex has been limited to physical violation, stabbing, ripping, murdering, or being murdered either literally or metaphorically. Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Clarissa Harlowe," The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), pp. 61-62.

⁴John Preston, The Created Self (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), p. 86.

⁵Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, Samuel Richardson: The Triumph of Craft (Knoxville, Tn.: The Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1974), p. 97.

⁶Alan Dugald McKillop, Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1936; rpt. New York: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1960), p. 130.

⁷So universal is the consensus that Lovelace fails as Clarissa triumphs that we must remember that in her somewhat controversial study of the relationship Judith Wilt will not even give Lovelace credit for raping Clarissa, insisting instead that Sinclair and her hangers-on had to finish the project for him. Judith Wilt, "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa," PMLA, 92 (1977), 19-32.

⁸John Carroll, Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 15.

⁹Christopher Hill, "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times," in Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 102-111. Specifically, Hill studies the conflict between individual freedom and contemporary social expectations of conduct, especially those dealing with marriage. Clarissa as social criticism is an important strain in scholarship on the novel. The leftist critic Arnold Kettle, for example, catalogues Clarissa with the literature of conflicts of class society, while Van Ghent agrees and then concentrates on what the novel discovers and concludes about class conflicts. As class myth, says Van Ghent, Richardson's work dramatizes the "exposure of his middle-class heroine to seduction by a nobleman" only to reveal that "if Clarissa may be read as a 'parable on the antithesis of the aristocratic and middle-class codes,' the parable contrives to demonstrate finally the superiority of the latter." Clarissa's virtue redeems her relatives, who lack it. Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel: Defoe to the Present, revised ed., 2 vols. in 1 (New York: Harper & Row, Perennial Library, 1968), I, 66. Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Clarissa Harlowe," p. 59.

¹⁰William M. Sale, Jr., "From Pamela to Clarissa," in Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 47. Sale suggests that what we see in Clarissa is a desperate but futile attempt to seek freedom in the face of the limitations imposed by "duty" and "responsibility." The novel indeed seems to make the point that Clarissa agrees with such a structure. The estate she has inherited from her grandfather and the independence it could afford her are frequently mentioned by all of the characters who participate in the Solmes incident. Anna Howe, who understands the desire for power by others and the effectual use of it in dealing with others far better than Clarissa ever does, insists: "Keep in your own hands

the estate bequeathed to you by your grandfather. Had you done so, it would have procured you at least an outward respect from your brother and sister . . . do you not observe how much your brother's influence has overtopped yours since he has got into fortunes so considerable; and since you have given some of them an appetite to continue in themselves the possession of your estate . . . ?" (I, XV, 66). However, in her response, Clarissa proves to be more idealistic than we might have thought and more practical than Anna might have believed. At one point in the Solmes affair, Clarissa admits that she almost wrote to her Uncle Harlowe about resuming her estate (I, LII, 264), until she realized that she had no one to support her in her claim; Uncle Harlowe, a trustee of the estate, is against her; Cousin Morden, the other trustee, cannot arrive before the marriage and he has probably been set against her; she believes that parents ought to have jurisdiction over a child; she cannot accept Lovelace's offer of help and no one else has offered; she cannot reasonably expect a non-family member to stand up for her in court against her parents; litigation would take a long time; she has been told that the will and the deeds have flaws in them; and her brother has threatened to move into the estate to prevent her from assuming control or, if she marries Lovelace, to be better able to offer all the legal opposition and difficulty he could to Lovelace if he tries to assume possession. Finally, Clarissa asserts that a child is not relieved of his duty to a parent simply because the parent neglects his duty to the child (I, LV, 279-280).

¹¹James T. Boulton, Arbitrary Power: An Eighteenth-Century Obsession (Nottingham: Univ. of Nottingham, 1966), p. 13.

¹²Boulton worries that a Marxist critic like Kettle can overlook the inordinate and capricious assumptions of political power and the implications of this for eighteenth-century readers.

¹³Ian P. Watt, The Rise of the English Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960), p. 221.

¹⁴Van Ghent, p. 57.

¹⁵Boulton, p. 15.

¹⁶A number of critics have studied Richardson's indebtedness to contemporary theater. For a quick perusal of the argument, reference could be made to Ira Konigsberg's survey of the relationship of Richardson's plots and

characters to earlier dramatic models of the eighteenth century in Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1968). Chapter two expands on Konigsberg's article in PMLA, 83 (1968), 42-53, entitled "The Dramatic Background of Richardson's Plots and Characters." Likewise, chapter four is a more developed version of "The Tragedy of *Clarissa*," Modern Language Quarterly, 27 (1966), 285-298. Valuable also is John A. Dussinger's study of the influence of late seventeenth-century drama on Richardson's conception of tragedy and even in his use of "pornographic" undertones. Philological Quarterly, 46 (1967), 18-33. To review Richardson's use of dramatic techniques, consult George Sherburn's "Samuel Richardson's Novels and the Theatre: A Theory Sketched," Philological Quarterly, 41 (1962), 325-439, and Leo Hughes's "Theatrical Convention in Richardson: Some Observations on a Novelist's Technique," Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 239-250. Hughes examines the influence of the drama on Richardson's descriptions of gesture and dress.

¹⁷Frederick R. Karl, The Adversary Literature--The English Novel in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Genre (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), p. 141. Indeed, Karl argues that Richardson's technique emulates Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work that Karl sees as paradigmatic for the eighteenth century. *Clarissa* "involves constant 'seeming' and 'becomings' so that, everyone and everything except, perhaps, the older Harlowes are involved in an unfolding process." Certainly, "the terms of life and death are ever changing." The epistolary method enhances this phenomenon, for "it is easier to become another person, or seem like one, in a letter than face to face; or, put another way, the letter complements, or reinforces, one's mask or anti-self" (p. 140).

¹⁸McKillop, pp. 148-149.

¹⁹John A. Dussinger, in "Richardson's Tragic Muse," Philological Quarterly, 46 (1967), 24, makes this point better than most by examining *Clarissa*'s similarity to the heroines of post-Restoration theater, a relationship which had been previously neglected. He notes Richardson's ambiguous combination of prurience and rigid morality as an influence of early eighteenth-century tragedy.

²⁰Mark Kinkadee-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), p. 137.

²¹Dussinger, p. 24. Lovelace, in a letter to Belford, remarks that rakes usually do not respond to tragedies except "those in which they themselves act the parts of tyrants and executioners; and, afraid to trust themselves with serious and solemn reflections, run to comedies, in order to laugh away compunction on the distresses they have occasioned." Belford's reformation is heralded by his sensitivity to Clarissa's sufferings.

²²Rachel Mayer Brownstein, "'An Exemplar to Her Sex'" Richardson's *Clarissa*," *Yale Review*, 67 (1977), 41. Clarissa and Lovelace live in a world of illusions, even to the point of creating them within their minds. The exemplar and the rake are not real; they are literary images that confine and distort the self. But within these personas, the characters can anticipate all the circumstances that both do and might befall them and discover the options available for reaction, revenge, and so forth. Clarissa can examine what happens to her from different points of view; furthermore, through the letter format, Clarissa observes several Lovelaces and the reader sees still more. Brownstein, pp. 30-47.

²³Elizabeth R. Napier, "'Tremble and Reform': The Inversion of Power in Richardson's *Clarissa*," *English Literary History*, 42 (1975), 214.

²⁴Napier, p. 216.

²⁵Napier, p. 218. In his study of the plan of *Clarissa*, Frederick Hilles was trying to establish sufficient evidence to prove that Richardson was remarkably concerned with form--a fact not generally accepted by critics at the time. Hilles's examination of the form of the novel leads him in his 1966 study to anticipate Napier's conclusions: "The symmetry of the plot suggests a highly stylized dance in which the two chief performers change places" ("*The Plan of Clarissa*," p. 186). Still later, we have Brownstein suggesting that "words do not work well during their interviews" because each wants absolute surrender and their individual but identical means of achieving that end depends upon the governance of appearances, which are much easier to control in correspondence in which one can edit out impulsive reactions, passions, and any element that might make one vulnerable to the opponent ("*Richardson's Clarissa*," p. 39).

²⁶Frederick Garber, "Richardson, Rousseau, and the Autonomy of the Elect," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 5 (1978), 165. While Garber does call *Clarissa* a tragedy of the paragon, he does not, to be sure, resort to a mypoic oversimplification of Richardson's effort. Instead, Barber looks at *Clarissa* and declares, "She is

financially and spiritually self-sufficient, independent of others both in what she owns and what she is, capable of an unusual but unimpeachable autonomy." To her distress, however, Clarissa is not allowed to mesh with the social scheme as an independent, self-sufficient being. Instead, the more persistently she endeavors to assert that autonomy, the further away from society and into unremitting isolation she is forced (pp. 155-156, 158).

²⁷Kinhead-Weekes, p. 222.

²⁸R. Loyalty Cru, Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1913; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966), p. 342. Cru quotes from a letter of Diderot's to Sophie Volland dated September 22, 1761, in which Diderot congratulates Sophie on some good deed she has done and attributes her action to the good influence of reading Clarissa. Diderot goes on in the same letter to suggest an emendation to Clarissa that would pit Anna against Lovelace. "That petulant girl does nothing but talk: I should have liked to see her in action. Clarissa is a lamb fallen under the teeth of a wolf, she has nothing to protect her but her timidity, penetration, and prudence; Miss Howe would have been a better match for Lovelace. These two would have given each other much to do. . . . If things had happened as I wish, Clarissa would have been saved. . . . In order to save her I should not have been sorry to make her friend run a few risks."

²⁹Joseph Wood Krutch, "Samuel Richardson," Five Masters (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1959), p. 158.

³⁰Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, translated by Angus David (1933; 2nd ed. 1951; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 98-99. Praz argues that Richardson strove "to conciliate morality with the unbridled sensuality of the period." However, Praz tends to forfeit his argument by failing to read carefully. For example, Richardson makes it clear that before the action of the novel begins, Arabella has terminated her alliance with Lovelace (though she did not really expect Lovelace to end his suit when she told him to do so). Nevertheless, Praz accuses Clarissa of stealing her sister's beau. Based on such flawed reading, Praz concludes that Richardson's "moralizing reveals itself fully for what it was--namely, little more than a veneer--in his French imitators, who sought in the subject of the persecuted woman chiefly an excuse for situations of heightened sensuality."

³¹Brownstein, p. 40.

³²Van Ghent, pp. 50, 54. While Van Ghent does examine Clarissa and Lovelace from various perspectives--Puritan, social, sexual--as mythical representations, she continues, nevertheless, to interpret both characters as types rather than as complex individuals. We must assume so by her very definition of "myth" as "a total symbolic construct" in which the attitudes and customs of a large social group are reflected and sanctioned by some "higher authority."

³³McKillop, pp. 24-25.

³⁴R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974), p. 94. In fact, Brissenden argues that Clarissa both asks and deserves to be raped because of her prudish, sentimental, and Puritanical attempt to deny that sexual desire exists (p. 184). To some extent, however, Brissenden rather severely minimizes the difficulties that Clarissa encounters. He insists that she "half-creates the nightmare world she lives in" by permitting all the "locked doors, secret houses, disguised persecutors, fierce wardresses, and so on, to terrify her (p. 161). Such a comment disregards the rather admirable effort she makes to defy all these measures taken against her and the perpetrators as well. It also expects an unreasonable amount of serenity in the face of adversity from a nineteen-year-old of very limited experience. And finally, it suggests that a lack of sexual desire for a particular potential partner is an excuse for rape, a rather ridiculous assertion at best.

³⁵Brissenden, p. 94.

³⁶Brissenden, p. 100.

³⁷Van Ghent, p. 54. Brissenden grants that Lovelace "is an Iago-like character, with a genuinely diabolic air. Ultimately he becomes like a man possessed" (p. 168). However, he really sees Lovelace as a developing character, perverted and impotent, with a desire to humiliate the Harlowes and to punish himself. In fact, Brissenden states outright that "Clarissa and Lovelace are not flat symbolic figures" but are instead "complex, contradictory, living individuals; and the conflict in which they and Clarissa's family are involved is fought out as much within the secret recesses of their own hearts as it is on the open field of battle" (p. 161).

³⁸ Van Ghent, p. 50.

³⁹ Ira Konigsberg, Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1968), pp. 80-81. Even Dorothy Van Ghent, while she argues that Clarissa is a symbolic construct representing an ideal-- in this case, the spirit of innocence and virtue--admits that Richardson carefully wove into Clarissa's character a "tragic flaw," which renders her at least somewhat responsible for her dilemma (p. 55).

⁴⁰ Erich Kahler, The Inward Turn of Narrative, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston, 3 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), 164-165.

⁴¹ McKillop, p. 131.

⁴² Brownstein, p. 41.

⁴³ Brophy, p. 107. We need to remember when we read Brophy's comment that the novel does not suggest that Clarissa enjoyed an early attraction to Lovelace. She knew him by reputation and knew the particulars of his brief relationship with her sister before she personally interacts with him at all. Clarissa admits to having developed a "conditional kind of liking," but this is hardly tantamount to erring by being attracted to him originally. Brissenden also speaks of a developing attraction borne out of distress more than out of sexual attraction. "To the besieged Clarissa, Lovelace, like Anne [sic] Howe, comes to represent sanity and reason, the fresh air of the world outside the Harlowe hot-house" (p. 170).

⁴⁴ Watt, p. 237. Few critics besides Watt and Kahler choose to suggest that Lovelace is really capable of loving Clarissa in any conventionally understandable way. Kahler is, as always, far more extreme in his assessment and stands alone in claiming that Lovelace realizes a "purified" love. However, other critics do see Lovelace as coming to love Clarissa in some way. Arguing that Clarissa is not "pure white" nor Lovelace "pure black," Brissenden asserts that "the final element in this complicated and involved set of relationships is the genuine love which grows between attempts to stifle and destroy." Of course, we should note that at the same time, Brissenden calls Lovelace an "insanely ingenious plotter," who traps Clarissa "in an almost incredible Chinese box of illusion." Brissenden's description of Lovelace as "a pitiable, perverted, and impotent villain" hardly supports any contention that Lovelace can and does truly love Clarissa" (pp. 168, 178, 186).

⁴⁵Kahler, III, 156.

⁴⁶Judith Wilt, "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa," PMLA, 92 (1977), 22-23. Wilt seems to thoroughly reject the Jobean theme. According to her, "With the outsider Lovelace, Clarissa can almost operate person to person, manipulator to manipulator. She feels no duty to him. She means to use him as temporary covering until she can make her way back to the covering father; she intends her submission to him to be a finite act, not an infinite relationship" (p. 21).

⁴⁷Wilt, p. 21.

⁴⁸Wilt, p. 26. Not only does Wilt see Sinclair and her crew as the real villains, she also argues that Lovelace and Clarissa are co-victims. After all, Lovelace himself says, "Who, that has once trespassed with them has ever recovered his virtue?" (I, XXXIV, 172).

⁴⁹Van Ghent, p. 54.

⁵⁰John Carroll, "On Annotating Clarissa," in Editing Eighteenth Century Novels: Papers on Fielding, Lesage, Richardson, Sterne, and Smollett, ed. G.E. Bentley, Jr. (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1975), p. 61.

⁵¹Watt, p. 213.

⁵²Kinkead-Weekes, p. 59.

⁵³Karl, p. 121. Karl agrees with Kinkead-Weekes that to the extent that Clarissa sees herself as singled out to be unhappy and to be the punisher of herself and her family, she displays "a peculiarly puritan pride" by attributing to herself an inordinate degree of importance. Kinkead-Weekes, p. 169. A reference to I, LXXXII, 420, and II, LXXV, 264, will demonstrate that in fact Clarissa eventually perceives the arrogance that she has exhibited by thinking too much of her own importance.

⁵⁴Lois A. Sklepowich, "Providential Labyrinth: The Development of Richardson's Christian Comedy," Diss. University of Virginia, 1973, p. 278. See also Clara L. Thomson, Samuel Richardson: A Biographical and Critical Study (London: Horace Marshall, 1900; rpt. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 194-195.

⁵⁵Mary Poovey, "Journeys from this World to the Next: The Providential Promise in *Clarissa* and *Tom Jones*," English Literary History, 43 (1976), 302.

⁵⁶Poovey, p. 305.

⁵⁷Poovey, p. 301.

⁵⁸Sklepowich, p. 23. For Sklepowich, every aspect of Clarissa serves to reinforce the doctrine that "in the providential novel, God's hand is revealed in the misfortunes as well as the triumphs of the particular individual."

⁵⁹Sklepowich, p. 281.

⁶⁰Sklepowich, p. 281. In this providential reading, Clarissa's suffering at the hands of her family constitutes the trial, which she fails. The remaining sufferings serve as the judicial consequence of that failure (p. 284). Clarissa's punishment, according to Sklepowich, results from her despair as well as presumption in thinking that she can help herself. She is guilty "of an impious impatience" (p. 280).

⁶¹Kinkead-Weekes, p. 271.

⁶²Ramona Denton, "Anna Howe and Richardson's Ambivalent Artistry in Clarissa," Philological Quarterly, 58 (1979), 60.

⁶³Denton, pp. 53-59.

⁶⁴Denton, p. 60.

⁶⁵Garber, pp. 158 and 168.

⁶⁶Garber, p. 155. Garber thinks that Clarissa's attitude toward marriage is an important aspect of her character and not just a convention of eighteenth-century fiction, as Margaret Doody claims. A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 134. In her argument Doody reminds us that Clarissa, in asserting her need to plot her own course, is not "fully aware of her own nature and capacities from the beginning of the novel. She is vaguely conscious that she is not like other members of her family, but she sees their differences as accidental, not fundamental. She tries to see herself as part of her family and in its own terms, even while the reader recognizes that she is expressing a virtue drawn from her own inner vision, and not from any example given in her own world" (p. 102). Clearly, Doody's stance would agree with Garber's analysis that Clarissa is not "particularly sacrificial." At the same time, Doody suggests that

Clarissa is, certainly early on, not so militant as Garber implies when he says that Clarissa sees marriage as "a frightening usurpation of a woman's rights." Clarissa responds to her perception of how things ought to be, including what rights and responsibilities a woman should have in marriage. She really does not realize that she expresses "a basic difference in moral attitude, different in kind rather than in degree" (Doody, p. 102).

⁶⁷Garber, p. 156.

⁶⁸Garber, p. 167.

⁶⁹Brissenden, pp. 129-130.

⁷⁰Leo Braudy, "Penetration and Impenetrability in Clarissa," in New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature: Selected Papers from the English Institute, ed. Philip Harth (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), p. 197.

⁷¹Braudy, pp. 186-187.

⁷²Braudy, p. 192.

⁷³Braudy, p. 201.

CHAPTER IV
ELUSIVE UNION: RICHARDSON'S ACHIEVEMENT

In his discussion of closure in the novel, Frank Kermode asserts that "the history of the novel is the history of forms rejected or modified," reminding us of "the dissidence between inherited forms and our own reality."¹ The reflection of such dissidence is a pre-dominant aspect of eighteenth-century fiction and certainly echoed by Richardson's readers, who detected a disquieting incompatibility between the dictates of received Christian wisdom and their perception of man's participation in directing his own fortunes. While Richardson's readers were perfectly conversant with scriptural teachings on the afterlife with God, they were uncomfortable with the afterlife as a solution to temporal problems.

With typical melodrama, Colley Cibber, nonetheless, adequately articulated the usual response to Clarissa's fate. When Laetitia Pilkington told Cibber that Richardson would have Clarissa raped and allow her to die, Cibber replied, according to Pilkington's account,

"G_d d_m him if he should"; and that he should no longer believe Providence, or eternal wisdom or Goodness governed the world if merit, innocence, and beauty were to be so destroyed.
(Correspondence, II, 128-129)

Cibber expressed to his friend what Ian Watt defines as "the overpowering sense of waste and defeat conveyed by Clarissa's death."²

A similar response was so common that Richardson had to ask in his Postscript, "Why is death set in shocking lights, when it is the universal lot?" To balance the scale, he proposes to make the deaths of the wicked as dreadful as possible and that of the good so "amiable" as to make even the wicked wish theirs could be so pleasant. Richardson further justified the "catastrophe" (as he himself called it) of her death and his refusal to extricate "suffering virtue" before "the completion of its reward" by invoking the Christian doctrine of future rewards. Richardson provides poetic justice for those who require it, but asks what poetic justice is but another appellation for what God, through revelation, teaches us, that is, that in this life, which we endure only as a state of probation, good and evil are so unequally encountered that we must look to future rewards for justice. Moreover, not thinking reference to Christian doctrine sufficient to justify Clarissa's death for all of his readers, Richardson goes on to invoke the authority of "the greatest master of reason . . . that ever lived," Aristotle. The Greek tragedians knew that a tragic end was more instructive than a comic. Even their governmental

bodies so acknowledged by commonly awarding the prize to a tragedy, rather than to a comedy.³

Clearly, Richardson provides a detailed justification for a conclusion which he thought was the only logical one. And we can remember the literary theory advanced by Poe and Stevenson, discussed in Chapter II, that the end should follow as the natural consequence of all that has preceded it.⁴ A glance at Aristotle's Poetics reminds us, of course, that writers have long subscribed to such a basic tenet. Aristotle defines the end of a literary piece quite simply as "that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule" (Poetics, VII, 52). So urgent is this principle that Aristotle concludes that "the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all" (Poetics, VI, 52).⁵ Even so, Richardson found that he had to justify Clarissa's death and explain why it is preferable to any other conclusion he could have offered. Moreover, having claimed providential authority, Richardson, nevertheless, felt a need to supplement it with reference to acknowledged, but nonetheless human, authorities.

Consistently, readers have failed to see Clarissa's death as either necessary or preferable. What is more, there is little agreement on why Clarissa dies. Christopher Hill argues that she dies because she is no longer

marriageable.⁶ However, both Lovelace and Wyerley try to persuade her to marry after the rape (IV, XXII, 70; IV, XXXVI, 90; and IV, LXXVI, 201). There may be reason to debate the sincerity of Lovelace's proposal but not the renewed suit by her old admirer Wyerley.

David Abraham asserts that Clarissa's death is sacrificial, reflecting the purpose that motivates her after the rape, that is to be "a suffering servant propitiating the anger of a Puritan God." To realize her goal, Clarissa renders herself passive and submissive in the face of death, according to Abraham.⁷ One problem with this theory is that Clarissa is, as we have already discussed, hardly passive or submissive from beginning to end. She actively asserts her will throughout and carefully orchestrates her final days and funeral, besides leaving written documents proffering her version of her story. A further problem lies in the lack of the presence of an angry, retributive providence in the story. We cannot see Clarissa as a suffering servant sacrificed to an angry God unless that God is one of the main characters in the novel. Yet, we never really feel God's presence near Clarissa.

In fact, while Frederick Karl suggests that the novel is about the individual's alienation from any position of safety and assurance,⁸ John Preston goes even further to theorize that Clarissa must die because

she represents freedom opposed to this sense of isolation and can realize her goal only by dying and thus moving beyond the alienating powers of language and of self.⁹ There is no sense, however, that Clarissa does not belong in and to the social milieu that Richardson so carefully delineates. She is very much a product of her affluent upper-middle class world and, indeed, conforms to its expectations more completely than anyone else in the novel. The sole exception could be only her refusal to marry Solmes, but Richardson elaborately creates a set of circumstances that renders her almost wholly blameless in this respect as well. She seems to the reader forced beyond reason so that she has little option but to resist. Her family seems to blame her for not retreating; Clarissa does not seem blameable for holding to her principles. Furthermore, before her death, she is offered protection, acceptance, and solace in this life. While her family does not tender support, she always has available to her Anna's and Mrs. Norton's acceptance, for example (even though she is physically isolated from them). Belford eventually offers protection. She could marry Wyerley or claim her estate. Even at the end, Clarissa makes friends who would care for her and ease her sense of alienation if she would allow them--the widow Lovick, the Smiths, the doctor, Mr. Goddard. Clarissa does have options available to her to mitigate the sense of

alienation. She chooses to eschew those possibilities and, indeed, by the end is the one who uses language to protect and, to an extent, isolate herself.

But is this to suggest that Clarissa commits suicide? Some critics have examined the possibility. Erich Kahler argues that Clarissa's death seems to Lovelace to be a "triumphant act of revenge committed by her indomitable will in their sexual struggle."¹⁰ On the other hand, Frederick Karl suggests that Clarissa's death is perhaps a kind of suicide prompted by revenge directed against her family. They thwarted her in life, and, by making her death a constant source of grief for the rest of their lives, she will be able to thwart them.¹¹ Indeed, Clarissa does reflect upon the effect that her death will have on her family (IV, XVIII, p. 60). And yet, there is no sense of elation or victory in her reverie. She closes her account, in fact, by censuring herself for her part in contributing to the unfortunate scenario.

From a quite different perspective, David Abraham also sees Clarissa's death as basically a suicide. He reasons that for Clarissa defilement of the body is defilement of the soul. Therefore, she is essentially dead at the time of the rape.¹² For this to be a satisfying explanation of Clarissa's demise, it seems that she would need to die literally a bit more quickly and assume a less active posture so that she can seem to be

merely merging her body into the state her soul has already attained. Clarissa is so busy preparing for, inviting, and ruminating upon death that Margaret Doody feels compelled to justify her activity in light of the Puritan assertion that the wicked turn from the thought of death while the good can and should focus their attention upon that state which will serve as a passage to eternity amid "visions of hope" and future blessedness. To reinforce this view, Doody compares Clarissa's Christian death with the deaths of fear and anguish suffered by the wicked characters. So we have, says Doody, a tableau contrasting the deaths of sinners and saint in terms of Richardson's and Clarissa's "ascetic, other-worldly religion at odds with the usual notion of 'Protestant ethic.'" ¹³ And yet, Clarissa's death is hardly anomalous. Doody outlines how closely it conforms to Jeremy Taylor's notions of appropriate death attitudes and rituals in Holy Living and Dying (circa 1650). As Taylor recommends, Clarissa engages in the elaborate process of reflecting on her sins, achieving a state of repentance, resigning herself to the approach of death, preparing herself to embrace death, and meditating upon death to familiarize herself with the idea. Doody, however, carefully avoids claiming that Clarissa's death is a suicide. She probably suffers, according to Doody, from "galloping consumption."¹⁴

Elizabeth Brophy posits that Clarissa dies because she loses her self-respect. Even before the rape, entangled in Lovelace's web of intrigue, Clarissa cries that she

shall never be able to look up, having utterly and for ever lost that self-complacency, and conscious pride, which are so necessary to carry a woman through this life with tolerable satisfaction to herself. (II, CII, 389)

Brophy concludes that when Clarissa finally realizes that she can never again live on good terms with herself, she loses the will to live.¹⁵ Rachel Brownstein attributes Clarissa's death to her will also, but interprets it as a more active effort than does Brophy. According to Brownstein, Clarissa "wills her death in order to assert the capacity to direct and dispose the self that the rape brutally mocked."¹⁶ Following a similar line of reasoning, Mark Kinkead-Weekes concludes that because she cannot be accused of suicide since she attempts to eat, sleep, and follow her physician's orders, Clarissa dies because she loses the will to live. Initially morbid and self-indulgent, Clarissa's effort eventually shifts from willing her death to preparing her spirit to accept death as a gift from God. She finally ceases worrying about her family or about being with Anna or about providing for her own earthly needs. As Kinkead-Weekes sees it, God alone reigns in Clarissa's heart at this point so that

she can achieve full forgiveness for her afflictors and even gratitude that she has been afflicted.¹⁷

Thus we have in Clarissa the most self-consciously intensive effort by the author to limit and direct reader response and interpretation. Yet we find among readers from before Clarissa's publication to the present radical divergence in perceptions of Clarissa and Lovelace and conclusions about the reason and necessity for Clarissa's death. The essential difficulty in most readings of Clarissa is that we attempt, as did Richardson, to reduce our interpretations to simplistic, or at least, formulaic ones. We deny our basic response to the novel: Clarissa is good and suffers unjustifiably, Lovelace is evil and essentially irredeemable, but Clarissa's death leaves us not at peace because while she has now joined her Heavenly Father and will suffer no more, we are left with the "overpowering sense of waste and defeat" of which Ian Watt speaks. The death leaves us wondering with Cibber what kind of providence would destroy merit, innocence, and beauty that has fought such a strong, unwavering fight.

To find the answer we must refer again to Kermode's remark that the novel as a genre has consistently rejected or modified forms for us by highlighting the disparity between the inherited forms by which we try to order our world and reality as we experience it. We

have another way to see Clarissa and examine why the heroine's end jars so on our nerves and why Richardson's unparalleled attempts to direct our reading failed if we consider the approach to eighteenth-century fiction recommended by Melvyn New and outlined earlier in Chapter I. However much Richardson might have wanted to affirm his perception of Christian doctrine, what he did, in fact, was vividly reflect the sense of vacillation and tentativeness with which eighteenth-century man approached his dual role as God's creature and as an intelligent, responsible being directing his own affairs while both conforming to and helping to reshape his social world. We need to refer again to New's statement that by the middle of the eighteenth-century, we have reached a point at which

fiction can only be understood as the reflection of that moment in Western thought when the antithetical ideas of man as God's creature and man as the radical product of his own autonomous will came together in uneasy and temporary alliance.¹⁸

By the mid-eighteenth century, we are at the apex of a slowly developing effort to modify, and in some respects, reject inherited forms, particularly various aspects of Christian doctrine. And, as New says, the ideas of man as God's creature and man as a product of his own will are basically antithetical. Consequently, literature which reflects this temporary and uneasy alliance will reflect

the vacillations, tentativeness, and sense of searching for direction inherent in any attempt to accommodate essentially irreconcilable world views. What Richardson tried to do was force one of the world views, the Christian, on readers who were living by the other, the secular, even though they at least nominally espoused the Christian world view. Without meaning to do so, Richardson epitomized the conflict between these world views. So we see in Clarissa an unconscious commitment to the secular world view, which makes the individual responsible for shaping his destiny, overlaid with the conscious remains of a dissipating Christian world view.

The girl Clarissa is caught between the secular world view which demands she actively participate in her future and the Christian world view that demands submissiveness to divine and secular authority.¹⁹ Richardson, with all his efforts to superimpose a Christian framework on Clarissa, was equally infused with the secular world view or he could not have so vividly reflected the psychological dilemmas attendant upon trying to accommodate both perspectives. Furthermore, Richardson's readers, contemporary and subsequent, were likewise encumbered by the emotional demands of dissimilar world views, neither of which they could wholly abandon to embrace the other. Their response to the novel demonstrates their tentativeness toward both approaches. If they could

wholly accept Christian dogma, they could more easily accept Clarissa's death. On the other hand, if they could reject Christian dogma outright in favor of seeing man as a product of autonomous will, they would have more easily identified a satisfactory secular resolution of the heroine's problems. And yet, even Richardson knew that marrying Clarissa off or removing her safely to her estate would have left the reader feeling equally bereft of an adequate explanation and resolution of Clarissa's predicament. The novel, then, remarkably mirrors a shared philosophical problem among author, heroine, and readers.

Part of Richardson's dilemma stems from his effort to validate an interpretation of Christianity that was no longer widely accepted. Whereas the Old Testament taught that the end of the matter for man was to "fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13), the New Testament focused on social pragmatism. So, Paul writes to Titus:

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world. . . . And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. (Titus 2:11-12 and 13-14)

The emphasis for Paul is clearly on the social good one accomplishes in this life. Salvation is predicated on

faith as exhibited by the good works one does to improve the social lot of his fellows. And such a doctrine predominated in theological teachings of the eighteenth century. As the Reverend Norman Sykes proclaimed in the Birkbeck Lectures in Ecclesiastical History at Trinity College, Cambridge,

The religious tradition of eighteenth-century churchmanship was admittedly homespun and practical. . . . The Church was conceived less as the august custodian of the keys of heaven and hell, than as the religious counterpart of civil society, wherein churchmanship was complementary to citizenship. The predominant tone of sermons was that of moderation, and their content was rational and ethical rather than emotional, dogmatic, or mystical. . . . The villagers of the country and the citizens of the towns who paid attendance upon Sundays at their parish churches did not conceive their approach as unto mount Sion, unto the heavenly Jerusalem. . . . Rather, they came to a concourse of their neighbors and acquaintance, "to converse with one another, to hear their duties explained, and to join in adoration of the Supreme Being." When in the last exercise their thought turned from the visible society there assembled to the communion of the spirits numbered in that host . . . the brethren of their parishes whose virtues were recorded in homely phrase upon mural tablets before their eyes, and who were of the humble succession of those who sit not high in the congregation, but whose work will maintain the fabric of the world. . . .²⁰

To become even more aware of the kind of social Christianity tendered to the average middle and upper class eighteenth-century layman, we can glance at the

usual personal libraries of individuals. Here we will find, alongside the individual's Bible and Prayer Book, an anonymous work which appeared in 1657 called The Whole Duty of Man. According to C.J. Stranks in his discussion of Anglican Devotion: Studies in the Spiritual Life of the Church of England between the Reformation and the Oxford Movement, The Whole Duty of Man was the "dominant book of religious instruction throughout the eighteenth century," having reached its twenty-eighth edition by 1790.²¹ Even a cursory perusal of The Whole Duty of Man impresses upon us the practical, social emphasis of its exhortations.

God hath given these promises to
no other end, but to invite us to
holiness of life; yea, he gave his Son,
in whom all his promises are as it
were summ'd up, for this end. We
usually look so much at Christ's
coming to satisfy for us, that we
forget this other part of his errand.
But there is nothing surer, than that
the main purpose of his coming into
the world was to plant good life among
men . . . all that Christ hath done for
us was directed to . . . the bringing
us to live Christianly. . . .²²

When Richardson or his readers attended services at their parish churches, the standard, moderate religion of the day echoed the teachings of The Whole Duty. One can read sermons by the preeminent divines of Richardson's time and notice the repeated chorus upon human nature and man as a moral agent. Teachings representative of the clergy are the words of Joseph Butler, Lord Bishop of

Durham, in sermons preached about the time that Clarissa was being written and published, the 1740s. In a sermon "Upon the Social Nature of Man," Bishop Butler asserts that

there are as real and the same kind of indications in human nature, that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow-creatures; as that we were intended to take care of our own life and health and private good; and that the same objections lie against one of these assertions, as against the other . . .

and again

From this comparison of benevolence and self-love, of our public and private affections, of the courses of life they lead to and of the principle of reflection or conscience as respecting each of them, it is as manifest, that we were made for society, and to promote the happiness of it; as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good.²³

Clearly, the focus of Christian thought current in Richardson's day was not the afterlife but this life, and not the ascetic, other-worldly mystical religion which Margaret Doody reminds us is representative of Richardson and Clarissa,²⁴ but a vibrantly socially aware religion stressing the individual's place in the social fabric. Nor does New Testament Christianity recommend death as preferable to life. The very doctrine is predicated on overcoming death. Christ's resurrection is the proof of victory over death. Furthermore, while assurance is

offered that rewards and punishments will be meted out after death, the Scriptures concentrate on life, first of all in this world and, secondly, after the event of death, which is, unfortunately, man's lot. And so we hear Paul writing to the Corinthians concerning death and the assurance of resurrection therefrom.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead. . . . For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. . . . The last enemy to be destroyed is death. . . . When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in Victory.

O death, where is thy victory?

O death, where is thy sting?"

(I Corinthians 15:20-21, 26, 54-55)

Paul constantly stresses the need to promote the public good, to love others, to offend no one (Romans 12). A reward for this goodness is that one need not fear death. At the same time, the Scriptures cannot be found to encourage one to hasten toward death, to sit and wait for death, or to eagerly embrace it. That Jesus himself raised a few individuals from the dead was taken to indicate that death was not truly preferable. In the New Testament, life is clung to as long as possible, but hope is provided in terms of a promise of residence with God. We must remember that even Jesus was said to grieve when he heard that his friend whom he loved, Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, had died, even though he knew he would raise Lazarus again (John 11:35).

Another consideration for the Christian when he contemplates death is his responsibility for the welfare of others. If he can serve others by living, he must strive to live. Paul, by this point, older, tired, beleaguered, having travelled exhaustively, been imprisoned, and threatened with death, writes to the Phillipians that he would like to die now, but it is necessary that he remain alive to continue his "fruitful labor" for their sakes (Phillipians 1:21-26). Social utility overrides personal gain or comfort in New Testament dogma. And this is the teaching to which Richardson's readers would have been exposed. This is the teaching to which some of his readers still are exposed.

What all of this tells us, of course, is that it was and remains understandable that readers of Clarissa should encounter difficulties with her death. Margaret Doody examines the concept of "holy dying," of which she determines Clarissa's to be an exemplar. To justify Clarissa's preoccupation with death, both intellectually and sensually, Doody cites, among other literary references, Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Dying. Here the emphasis is on the death of a holy person contrasted with the death of the wicked.²⁵ While readers were aware that Christian doctrine teaches that the wicked dread death whereas the good have no need to fear, they still were primarily infused with a socially oriented religion that

would value Clarissa more in life than in death. Like Richardson, they would feel compelled to affirm the notion that theoretically, at least, a good person who had nothing to fear in the afterlife is better off with God. Since their minds were consistently directed toward the world and how they fit into the social scheme, Richardson's readers could not feel comfortable with the death of a socially valuable individual. They would have felt uncomfortable as well if Clarissa had lived and gone on to marry or live as a goodly spinster. Somehow a grating sense of futility would have intervened. There would be lacking a sense that God was directing her fate and allowing her to suffer for any sensible reason. There would be lacking as well any sense that Clarissa had, by directing her own fate, overcome her adversaries. Hardy's sense of inexorable fate might have ensued, or perhaps the unsatisfying humanism of George Eliot's Middlemarch, diffusing Dorothea's "ardent willingness" to wrest a greater than superficial meaning for her life.

The providentialists, as we noted in Chapter III, argue that Clarissa's pride contributes to her suffering and that only when she becomes absolutely passive does God direct her affairs and take her to Him. Thinking that she sees this passivity in Clarissa, Mary Poovey calls the novel a "fictional expression of the Christian epic."

This pattern, based on the design of providence with its attendant promise of reward, is necessarily fictionalized as romance. What is at issue, then, is not the outcome of the plot, but the way of conceptualizing and expressing the relationship between the absolute world, from which the guarantee proceeds, and the temporal world, in which the promise must be earned.²⁶

Poovey is correct in asserting that what is at issue is not the outcome. Clarissa's death is an important element, but not the crux of the novel. Because of its psychological probing, we cannot really call the novel a romance, a form which depended on types, for Clarissa and Lovelace are complex individuals whose thoughts and motivations cannot be easily explained. On the other hand, I would like to build on the latter half of Poovey's statement to suggest that what is important in Clarissa is a way of conceptualizing and expressing Clarissa's attempts to comprehend, among other things, the relationship between the absolute world and the temporal world and the tentativeness of her association with either. She finds herself in New's temporary and uneasy alliance, and Richardson's attempt to find an expression of that sensation is more relevant than the outcome.

As Frank Kermode argues in his discussion of fictional endings,

we concern ourselves with the conflict between the deterministic pattern any plot suggests, and the freedom of persons within that plot to choose and so to alter the structure, the relations of beginning, middle, and end.²⁷

This is precisely the concern in Clarissa. The issue in the novel is how Richardson mirrors a world in intellectual transition and the ontological insecurities of characters caught in that transition. Neither the reader nor Richardson knows the degree to which Clarissa is caught helplessly in a deterministic pattern or the degree to which she can influence, modify, or alter that pattern. Anticipating, as Melvyn New suggests, the psychological fiction to come, Richardson reflects the sense of vacillation, insecurity, and tentativeness as Clarissa attempts to accommodate a "temporary and uneasy" alliance between providential control and self-determination.²⁸

In discussing Fielding's fiction, Martin Battestin remarks on Fielding's criticism, perhaps with Richardson in mind, of unnatural idealism in characterization and suggests that the novelist was perhaps glancing at Richardson's "lifeless paragons," like Sir Charles Grandison.²⁹ But surely Fielding, who admired Clarissa, did not mean our heroine. To interpret Clarissa as a paragon would be to misinterpret the work. Richardson meant her to be good and virtuous and struggling to determine how she could conform to the doctrines of received wisdom (Christianity) and the dictates of the reality of her social milieu with the pressures it was capable of exerting. Richardson wants the reader to affirm that Clarissa does conform as best she can to both Christian

and social principles. Unfortunately, Richardson wanted us then to step out of the universe of coexistence between the spiritual and the temporal to validate only the spiritual lesson of future rewards. This we cannot do, even as we wince at the possibility of ending Clarissa's story like Pamela's or like Eliot's Dorothea's.

Cynthia Wolff says of Clarissa that

as a novel of character, an example of psychological realism, the work is superb; as a novel which attempts the further task of placing character in a coherent moral or social framework, the narrative leaves us not completely satisfied.³⁰

And so it does, because the moral and social frameworks of Richardson's, Clarissa's, and his readers' world were in a state of flux and thus of necessity not wholly coherent. In fact, the novel is superb in its psychological realism, as Wolff says, but also in its placement of character within a shifting moral and social framework that can no longer provide clear cut direction for even the most attentive individual.

We must remember, as well, that Richardson was not completely satisfied with the coherence offered by the spiritual and secular worlds as he perceived them. He wanted his interpretations, or dogmas, if you will, and his reality to coincide. But they did not. He revised the novel three times to try to close it further because he wished to claim that there is no conflict between

providential determinism and assertion of human will. In fact, however, he sensed that there was, and probably unconsciously, but nevertheless unmistakably found himself overtaken by Kermode's disquieting "dissidence" between inherited forms and his own reality, by and large the same reality he reproduced in Clarissa. Richardson wanted neither to reject nor to modify inherited forms. Nevertheless, through his art he produced a vision of the world already in the grip of metamorphosis. His readers were caught as well, responding to Clarissa through their perception of change. Richardson responded to them with an emotional urge to validate a Christian world view already greatly modified and partially rejected. So we see Clarissa conforming precisely to Jeremy Taylor's model for holy dying, a model well known and highly regarded in the eighteenth century. Yet readers then, as now, rejected the practice as a model for practical behavior.

We have to agree with A.D. McKillop that Richardson "moves in a world of moral ambiguities," placing an individual "tenacious of rights and principles" into conflict with the whole system.³¹ By the eighteenth century, Clarissa was contending with an as yet not wholly compatible dual system. Richardson, Clarissa, and Richardson's readers all tentatively, cautiously try to accommodate the secular world view of a changing society that has never before seen such social mobility, giving

the individual unprecedented license and latitude, and the Christian world view that has shifted from the notion of a particular providence that meticulously oversees the affairs of individuals and societies to a distant diety whose participation is not really identified except in the afterlife as He metes out due reward.

Clarissa attributes her death to grief, complaining only a few days before the end that such a death is the slowest of all. In the same letter, Belford reports that she prays only that she will submit to the death and insists that she is sure she will be happy once she is rid of her "rags of mortality" (IV, CVI, 305). More to the point, she will no longer have to contend with conflicting world views which offer more uneasiness than direction. Clarissa does have options besides death, but not one of them is wholly acceptable within her society. Neither is death. She will, at any rate, escape the dilemma through death. Richardson and a succession of readers have had to deal with the baffling difficulty of accommodating disparate world views. Nor is there yet in sight any likelihood that the shifting Christian world view and the changing secular world view will stabilize, mesh with each other, and attract a consensus of support among educated, socially aware, and spiritually susceptible individuals. Until then we have from Richardson one captive moment of an "uneasy and temporary alliance"

between the notion of man as God's creature and man as the product of his own will, a moment in which readers caught in the same alliance, recognize it in Clarissa, and attempt to elude the disagreeable feeling resulting from the lack of acceptable ways to accommodate all the aspects of both world views in a state in which both the Christian and secular world views are espoused, but neither wholly.

A close look at a few salient episodes of the novel suggest concretely what is most questionable about some of the critical approaches to Clarissa that have been proffered thus far. Or at least we can begin to understand why there has been such difficulty determining why Clarissa's situation seems so complex to us, despite Richardson's assurance that it is, indeed, quite simple. In fact, the storyline is so direct and unambiguous (as in the romance of a somewhat earlier time) that its clarity belies the philosophical complexity of Clarissa's dilemma. Since the aspects of the work that cause contention are related, one's approach to Clarissa, her options, and her decisions depends upon one's understanding of Clarissa's position, theologically and sociologically, within her world. Consequently, for all the discussion about her demise, Clarissa's end is not the issue. The real issue in the novel and for readers is what to make of her predicament in the bourgeois world so minutely and

accurately depicted that Richardson's readers see this world as their own and recognize Clarissa's dilemma as one within the realm of possibility. A romance insists that we admit it is fiction. However, the world of Richardson's novel is so real that it insists that we respond to it as real, bringing our value systems and perceptions of reality with us.

A charge commonly urged by the providentialists, as we have discussed, is that, as Lois Sklepowich puts it,

Clarissa's actions up to her escape represent a . . . violation of the providential code of behavior. Her initial sufferings in the bosom of her family have served as her period of "trial" and, that trial having been failed, her later sufferings constitute the judicial consequence.³²

The error which precipitates her punishment, according to Sklepowich, is corresponding with Lovelace despite prohibition against it, the legitimate concerns urging her on notwithstanding. God, says Sklepowich, is "the direct agent" of a moral design which tests, punishes, and ultimately redeems Clarissa.³³ Such theories, like Christopher Hill's that she must die because she is no longer marketable goods, are tidy, but fail to account for the pervasive sense of tentativeness in Clarissa's responses, in Richardson's editing, and in the readers' bewilderment.

Clarissa's problem is not really, it seems to me, insufficient passiveness. In fact, although "passivity"

is the term commonly employed by providentialist critics, I would suggest that they are far more concerned about the degree of Clarissa's submissiveness, a more active term than passiveness (which suggests inaction) and implying a concerted act of the will. Richardson clearly abhors passiveness and recommends submissiveness only in doing one's duty and to the extent that being submissive does no violence to one's sense of right or of honor.

Early in the novel, Clarissa tells Anna that her relatives "all have an absolute dependence upon what they suppose to be meekness in my temper. But in this they may be mistaken" (I, VIII, 37). The question is whether Clarissa here reveals an attitude which Richardson wishes to validate or to challenge. A quick look at Mrs. Harlowe indicates that her essential function in the novel is to provide Richardson's answer by standing in sharp and unsatisfactory contrast to her daughter. Likewise, Clarissa's aunt, in her minor role, underscores Richardson's objection to people of sense subduing their wills to the whims of people who may be in a position of authority which they insist upon abusing. The earliest references to Mrs. Harlowe lay partial blame for the situation and what will ensue from it on her refusal to employ her sense and will to effect a resolution of the standoff between Clarissa and the rest of the family. In her fifth letter

to Anna, Clarissa discusses her mother's role and how the present turmoils

afflict exceedingly a gentle and sensible mind, which has from the beginning, on all occasions, sacrificed its own inward satisfaction to outward peace. . . . Yet would she but exert that authority which the superiority of her fine talents gives her, all these family feuds might perhaps be extinguished. . . . (I, V, 22)

Even toward the end, when her daughter has been reduced to asking nothing more than relief from her father's curse and a final blessing, Mrs. Harlowe again dwindles into impotence. Refusing Mrs. Norton's plea that Mrs. Harlowe read a letter recently received from the now dying Clarissa, the forlorn mother laments, "I must sail with the tide; my own judgment joining with the general resentment . . ." (IV, XV, 53). Nor does Richardson let the reader forget that Mrs. Harlowe and Aunt Hervey refuse even to try what their influence might achieve, right to the end. Within the month preceding Clarissa's death, Mrs. Norton assures Clarissa that she would find that she has "an indulgent mother, were her mother at liberty to act according to her own inclination." Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the mother has some influence, since Mrs. Norton says that Mrs. Harlowe's softening "gives me great hopes that all will end well at last" (IV, XX, 66).

Even so, the unhappy parent is much to be pitied, according to Aunt Hervey, because Mrs. Harlowe, like the

aunt, "is obliged to act a part entirely contrary to her inclinations" (IV, LXXI, 192). For her compliance, Mrs. Harlowe is rewarded with fear and regret. She declines the opportunity to see Clarissa's letter because, were she to appear unsettled as a result, "the grief may expose me to harshnesses" (IV, XV, 53). Bemoaning Clarissa's death, she acknowledges her contribution to it: "I have been too passive. . . . The temporary quiet I have been so studious all my life to preserve has cost me everlasting disquiet!" (IV, CXXXIX, 394). Thus, there is no indication that anything good accrues to Mrs. Harlowe or to her family as a result of her submission of her will to the clamoring wills of others.

We need to note, as well, the effect of Mrs. Harlowe's example on Clarissa and Anna, both of whom Richardson clearly likes. The author does censure Anna for failing to value the good in Hickman and for being a bit too pert, but he likes Anna and makes it clear that she is a good friend to Clarissa and worthy of having a Clarissa for a friend. At no time is Mrs. Harlowe's passivity recommended to Clarissa and Anna for emulation. It is really the only objection Richardson makes to her character, averring that otherwise she is a good woman who does credit to her birth and fortune. Repeatedly, Clarissa and Anna notice that Mrs. Harlowe invites some of her discomfort. To Anna, Clarissa says of her mother,

had she been of a temper that would have borne less, she would have had . . . less to bear than she has had. No commendation, you'll say, of the generosity of those spirits which can turn to their own disquiet so much condescending goodness. Upon my word, I am sometimes tempted to think that we may make the world allow for and respect us as we please, if we can but be sturdy in our wills, and set out accordingly. (I, V, 22-23)

Echoing Clarissa and enlarging upon her discourse, Anna says that even her friend is far too obliging and could minimize or eliminate some of her difficulties if she asserted her own will more. Declares Anna,

had I twenty brother James's, and twenty sister Bell's, not one of them, nor all of them joined together, would dare to treat me as yours presume to treat you. The person who will bear much shall have much to bear all the world through. . . . (I, X, 43)

The fact that Richardson has Anna refer to siblings, who lack authority over Clarissa, instead of parents, whose authority is acknowledged to be extensive, undercuts the validity of the assault against Clarissa and further obscures the argument that one must do one's duty whether or not others do so. If the scheme had been initiated by her parents, Clarissa's culpability would be greatly enhanced. But Richardson never lets us forget that James and Arabella have masterminded the project and have been permitted to bully the parents, aunt, and uncles into promoting it. Sixteen days before Clarissa's death, Aunt Hervey reports to Mrs. Norton that James would not leave

for his estate in Scotland without assurance that the parents would not be reconciled with Clarissa without his consent (IV, LXXI, 192). This suggests that reconciliation or even prevention would have been possible, were it not for James and Arabella, and that the parents are blameable for conceding some of their authority to favor the whims of willful, jealous siblings. It also supports Clarissa in her resistance since the perpetrators lack authority and those with authority have abdicated it.

Obligingness in women (especially wives, mothers, and daughters) is indeed reinforced by Richardson. Clarissa admires her mother's art "of conquering by seeming to yield" (IV, XVIII, 59). The question, as in every aspect of Clarissa, is degree. How much control should one bear? For a married woman or daughter, Richardson clearly insists that she can expect to deal with unwarranted pressure as the norm, which makes it all the more important that she choose a husband wisely rather than submit to an inferior intellect or character. When her mother sighs that she is forced to tolerate "many humours," Clarissa responds that perceiving so has given her a negative impression of marriage, securing her determination "if one must bear undue control, to bear it from a man of sense" (I, XX, 102). To Anna, Clarissa says that her mother deserves the most pity, more than herself, despite the machinations against her: "Yet had

she not let violent spirits . . . find their power over hers, it could not have been thus" (I, XX, 103).

The obvious result, and, significantly, the point Richardson asserts is that nothing good is to be gained by bowing to inferior minds which lack judgment or kindness--and most important, good moral sense--even though they have authority:

And have I any encouragement to follow too implicitly the example which my mother sets of meekness, and resignedness to the wills of others? . . . Has she by her sacrifices always found the peace she has deserved to find? . . . The very contrary . . . we poor mortals by our over-solicitude to preserve undisturbed the qualities we are constitutionally fond of, frequently lose the benefits we propose to ourselves from the steadiness of mind . . . when we are absolutely convinced of being in the right . . . and when it is exerted in material cases is a quality which, as my good Dr. Lewen was wont to say, brings great credit to the possessor of it; at the same time that it usually, when tried and known, raises such above the attempts of the meanly machinating. He used . . . to inculcate upon me this steadiness upon laudable convictions. And why may I not think that I am now put upon a proper exercise of it? (I, XIX, 93)

With all his devotion to submission, Richardson recommends that it be tempered by judgment. This is why we encounter Dr. Lewen, Clarissa's principal religious mentor, advocating "steadiness of mind" in the same conversation in which Clarissa confesses that her mother's "meekness and resignedness to the wills of others" provides no example

that she can in good conscience follow. We know without a doubt that Richardson approves of Dr. Lewen and Clarissa and disapproves of Mrs. Harlowe. Therefore, we must pay attention to the conclusions Clarissa draws from observing the results of her mother's self-repression. If we believe that Richardson was too careful and too consistent to contradict himself, especially on one of his avowed motives for writing the story of Clarissa, as we have discussed in Chapter II above, then we have to determine what he considers inexcusable exceptions to the rule that one must do one's duty whether or not others do theirs. To this end, he faults Clarissa for carrying on a forbidden correspondence with Lovelace despite providing some excellent reasons (or, he perhaps fears, only rationalizations) for her doing so and causing her family to discover after her death that she was innocent and prudent in that correspondence, as well as honorably motivated. At the same time, Richardson clearly approves her determination to assert her own will so that she can stand "self-acquitted," "a blessing to be preferred to the opinion of all the world" (I, LXXXIX, 458).

In fact, Richardson even condemns Mrs. Harlowe's "indolent meekness" through Anna's recriminations.

I cannot help thinking that she is the less to be pitied, as she may be said . . . to have long behaved unworthy of her birth and fine qualities, in yielding so much as she yields to encroaching

spirits . . . for the sake of preserving a temporary peace to herself; which was the less worth endeavoring to preserve, as it always produced a strength in the will of others, and was followed by a weakness of her own. . . . (I, XXVII, 129-131)

Unworthy, selfish, indolent! Yet while he asserts that a child's duty is to obey, Richardson never allows a character of whom he approves to censure Clarissa once her motives for behaving as she does are known. Clarissa is always characterized as active, selfless, and worthy. She employs her judgment and moral sense at all times. Having weighed the evidence, to determine what is right, Clarissa embarks on a course and steadfastly maintains direction without regard to short-term discomfort. Groping for temporary peace does not tempt Clarissa. Thus, she refuses to marry Solmes, and later Lovelace, even while she offers to make every reasonable concession her family can dictate. However, since marrying Solmes and accepting terms so damaging to his family cannot be right, according to her reasoning, there is never the first indication that she will waver in her resolution (I, XIII, 59-60). As she tells Anna, "To do evil, that good may come of it, is forbidden" (I, LXXVII, 424). Consequently, Clarissa proposes that

the gentlest spirits when provoked (causelessly and cruelly provoked) are the most determined. The reason may be that not taking up resolutions lightly--their very deliberation makes them the

more immovable. And then when a point is clear and self-evident, how can one with patience think of entering into an argument or contention upon it? (I, XIV, 63)

Moreover, Richardson repeatedly reinforces the determination in her to frustrate "encroaching spirits." Early on, Clarissa articulates the need to stand firm in dealing with Lovelace if she hopes to be more than a pawn for him. "It is easy to see," says the beleaguered Clarissa, "that Mr. Lovelace's advantages . . . will every day increase, and I shall be more and more entangled" (I, XXII, 110). Caught between the jealousy and avarice of her siblings and the connivances of Lovelace, Clarissa is "uneasy to think how I have been drawn on one hand and driven on the other . . ." (I, XXII, 110). In one of her first letters, she exclaims to Anna, "how can one be such a reptile as not to turn when trampled upon!" (I, VII, 30). After overhearing James and Arabella discussing the need to force the Solmes issue to a conclusion before Cousin Morden can arrive to interfere on her behalf, Clarissa comprehends her danger and avers that her persecutors must "no more call me meek and gentle" (I, LIII, 267). Declaring to her uncle that her family's command to marry Solmes "will deprive me of my free-will, and make me miserable for my whole life" (I, XXXII, 152), Clarissa renews her conviction that hesitating to declare her opposition will increase her difficulties (I, XIII, 61). She neither

wavers, nor doubts her strength to resist, nor questions the rightness of her position. When Lovelace tries to assure her that she would have been lost to Solmes if she had not escaped Harlowe Place, Clarissa declares,

You know not, sir . . . what a spirit
I have; you know not what I can do, and
how I can resist when I think myself
meanly or unreasonably dealt with. . . .
(I, XCIV, 482)

The problem for Clarissa and for Richardson is making a distinction lost on the Solmeses of the world, who mistake "meekness and gentleness of disposition for servility and baseness of heart" (I, XXXII, 156). Richardson and Clarissa must define that distinction between appropriate submission to legitimate authority and inappropriate passiveness, which by implication, sanctions spurious or overreaching prerogative. Defining this distinction is difficult, if not really impossible, because of the shifts in social and theological thought in the mid-eighteenth century. Just as one is hard put to identify the exact instant of a scientific phenomenon, Richardson could not perfect a definition because of the immediacy of the moral modifications underway. He could have acknowledged the shift, making the individual's grasp of the degree of responsibility he has for his own fortunes and the degree to which he must depend upon Providence the problematic core of the work, as it is in, say, Thomas Hardy's fiction. But Richardson was probably not able

consciously to admit such a predicament, feeling compelled instead to validate social regulations and religious doctrines to which he felt a personal need to subscribe. The result is that, having set up the dichotomy (Clarissa cannot submit without violating her Richardson-approved sense of right, honor, and integrity, but cannot resist without being accused of holding herself above the authority of society and providence), Richardson unwittingly unfolds the evident chaos in her attempts to satisfy obligations without incurring just censure. Since the goals are apparently mutually exclusive, she cannot completely succeed. Thus, the most Richardson can expose is his attempt to make the goals seem compatible, while he chronicles Clarissa's efforts to achieve an unachievable aim.

What makes Clarissa so important is its capturing of a serious author's efforts to reflect, while denying, a change in the belief in the particularity of Providence and in the individual's social responsibility to others and to himself. Clarissa is a character attempting to wend her way through that maze (which Richardson and her society would like her to think is a straight, marked path). She is caught in an undefinable, and barely avowable, alliance between allegiance to old forms of authority, both social and religious, and a new sense of the individual who not only can affect his lot in life

through the choices he makes, but must do so, and is held accountable by society and by Providence for what he does. No longer are the social and religious rules clearly defined, requiring only as strict adherence as the conscientious individual can achieve. Now the individual must conform to some forms of authority and simultaneously define for himself what is right. Clarissa shows us a character who can influence neither God nor others to intercede in her behalf. We watch her unfolding awareness that, even though she did nothing (save the illicit correspondence) to create her predicament, and that not one of her options is acceptable, she will, nonetheless, be held accountable by society and by God for how she handles the situation. Thus, in dealing so minutely with Clarissa's need to submit to appropriate authority and to account to God and to the world for the issue of her life, Richardson captures and examines for us a moment in which the individual attempts to accommodate the antithetical concepts of man as God's vassal who need only obey and man as molder of his destiny.

The predominant sense Clarissa exhibits of her situation is that none of the questions is intelligible and none of the answers is right. She cannot explain how her family can so far overstep decent bounds in dealing with her, nor how Lovelace can be so unrelenting in his abuse. Nor can she discover a means of resolving the situation

except through death (which offers its own ramifications). Nor can she comprehend why no help presents itself, either here or from Heaven. And so Clarissa laments, "I am strangely perplexed" (I, LXI, 313). And so are the readers. I would suggest that this statement is central to the novel. Clarissa and the readers are strangely perplexed about what she is to do, while Richardson is strangely perplexed that his readers "misinterpret" her death.

As Clarissa begins her effort to understand and deal with what she must confront, she articulates the pervasive sense in the novel. She writes to Anna that

whatever course I shall be permitted or be forced to steer, I must be considered as a person out of her own direction. Tossed to and fro by the high winds of passionate control (and, as I think, unreasonable severity), I behold the desired port, the single state, which I would fain steer into; but am kept off by the foaming billows of a brother's and sister's envy, and by the raging winds of a supposed invaded authority; while I see in Lovelace the rocks on one hand, and in Solmes, the sands on the other; and tremble lest I should split upon the former or strike upon the latter. (I, LXIX, 346)

There is no reference to a hope that either man or God will provide direction or succor. Moreover, her goal is the single life, and indeed she manifests this preference early on, as she expresses a negative attitude toward men and their courtship intrigues (I, II, 8). And, as

we have already noticed, she is concerned about having to submit to undue control, even from a man of sense. At any rate, she does not express any immediate interest in Heaven as her goal, nor does Richardson introduce a providential presence.

What he does introduce is an acute awareness that Clarissa is in serious straits with only her judgment and previous training to help her. Her mother tells her that she is "young and unbroken" and must learn that life as a child was easy but now duty and obedience will make her bend all her will to her family's will and later, of course, to her husband's (I, XVII, 78-79). Soon, Clarissa realizes that the measures her family is taking with her are intended to break her spirit (I, XXXII, 156). And not long after her escape with Lovelace, she knows that "he is for breaking my spirit before I am his; and while I am, or ought to be . . . in my own power" (II, LXXVII, 277).

Once she perceives that she is up against people who are determined to subordinate her, Clarissa looks about and finds that she must do battle alone. God is mentioned, but no presence is felt. Indeed, his agent, Morden, spends the entire book not on the scene, but trying to reach it, an apt image of Richardson's perhaps unconscious sense of providence's failure to appear on stage in the mid-eighteenth century. Clarissa is removed

from the support of any friends who might assist her. Richardson leaves her truly alone, in any direct sense certainly. The next stage, then, is to discover how she deals with the situation.

Harrassed and perplexed, with no savior at hand, Clarissa attempts to extricate herself. Wondering how she has deserved this (I, VIII, 35), Clarissa asks only for autonomy and refuge. In every difficulty, however, Richardson leaves her without adequate resources or support. Yet he does not make it entirely impossible for her to seize opportunities. She has to make decisions to act or not. Again, Richardson wants Clarissa to exhibit that steadiness of mind we mentioned. Clarissa's is a mind developed as Richardson thought appropriate, socially and spiritually. She exhibits from the beginning an attribute that Richardson would openly disavow in theory but strenuously affirm in practice. That is, Clarissa's spiritual trappings are more a part of her social being, that secular religion, as it were, that we defined earlier from the words of Bishop Butler, rather than a devotion permeating her essence or the heart of her society. Terry Eagleton, in his study of Criticism and Ideology, asserts that "the ideological function of art is to affirm human solidarity against disintegrative individualism." Richardson makes such an affirmation in fact by having Clarissa focus on the social religion portioned out by

the clerics of the day and geared toward ensuring socioeconomic order in this life more than toward ensuring spiritual security in the afterlife.³⁴

Aware that neither passive acquiescence nor abdication of her responsibility by submission of her will to the wills of others is an acceptable option, Clarissa attempts to wrest control from those who have no moral right to assume control over her. She is aware that assuming control will not assure an easier passage through a difficult situation; nevertheless, it is the only direction she can take. Explaining her rejection of Solmes to Miss Howe, Clarissa confesses that

I exceedingly dread the conflicts I know I must encounter with. It is possible that I may be more unhappy . . . than were I to yield the point. . . . But then . . . we have nothing to do but to choose what is right; to be steady in the pursuit of it; and to leave the issue to Providence. . . . (I, XIX, 94)

All, in fact, that Clarissa asks is moral autonomy. She asks James to take her estate if that is what he wants, "only leave me myself." Given autonomy, she believes she can effect a change in the situation that James and Arabella have precipitated, and that, having handled others successfully, she thinks she can handle Lovelace too (I, XCIV, 474-475).

Throughout the novel, Clarissa's quest is for autonomy because only within the realm of being free to

choose what is right can she find refuge and no longer fear striking the rocks or the sand on either side. After the rape, Clarissa vehemently rejects Lovelace's proposal of marriage, asking him to allow her to try "to secure the only hope I have left." "Am I," she pleads once again, "now at liberty to dispose of myself as I please?" (III, XXXV, 222). Realizing that Lovelace still refuses to release her, Clarissa wails in despair, "Where can I be safe?" (III, XXXIX, 239).

We are not to conclude that Clarissa thinks she is more capable than either God or other people. She pursues autonomy for two reasons. First, as we have discussed, she believes that the individual is responsible for the direction of his life and will be held accountable by God and by society for what occurs. And, as we have seen, this situation precludes trying to abdicate responsibility by retreating into submission. Secondly, she feels deserted. There is no one else but herself on whom she can unquestionably rely, not even God or Anna.

To Mrs. Norton, Clarissa writes after the rape

I must call myself a lost creature as to this world, yet . . . I have not suffered either for want of circumspection, or through credulity or weakness. Not one moment was I off my guard . . . had I not been rejected by every friend, this low-hearted man had not dared, nor would have had opportunity to treat me as he has treated me. (III, LXXIX, 121)

In a letter to Captain Tomlinson, written when she still

believes him to be an intermediary with her uncle, Clarissa complains that she has "no friend to advise with" (III, XV, 121). And later she admits to Lovelace, "I know that I have not now a friend in the world. Even Miss Howe has given me up . . ." (III, XLVIII, 265).

Repeatedly, Clarissa seeks refuge, which becomes more and more remote as family and friends desert her and as Lovelace reveals his unrelenting fixation on the sadistic game he is playing with Clarissa as a captive participant. She cannot assume her estate despite Anna's urging that she do so, for, as she explains to Anna, she has no one to support her in her case. Her Uncle Harlowe is one of the trustees and is against her. Cousin Morden is the other trustee, but he is inaccessible and, Clarissa fears, probably has already been set against her by her family. Furthermore, since she is confined, if news arrived that she had prevailed, her family, she says, would conceal it from her (I, LV, 279).

Marriage to Lovelace would not provide refuge, Clarissa reasons. Such a marriage would tie her forever to a man whose baseness she cannot sanction by dressing his crimes in social respectability (IV, LXXXVII, 250). At one point, six weeks or so before the rape, Clarissa reveals to Anna that she would probably accept Lovelace's proposal should he ask again, but he does not (II, XXXVIII, 138). By the time he does, Clarissa knows

the depths of his villainy. She resists the urgings of all her family, of Anna, and Mrs. Howe, even of Belford, the one person who also knows the extent and premeditatedness of Lovelace's wickedness, to marry Lovelace and thereby adopt a social pretense that nothing of import occurred, except through her own folly.

When the famous penknife episode occurs, Clarissa threatens, "The LAW only shall be my refuge!" "The law," she declares, "shall be my resource: the LAW" (III, LIII, 289). However, upon being urged after the rape to prosecute, Clarissa responds shortly before she dies that even if she could bring herself to appear against him, the outcome of the trial could easily go against her when it is understood that she had given him a clandestine meeting, had been tricked away, and had lived under the same roof with him for weeks without complaint or cause of complaint (IV, LXVII, 184). Clearly, a court of law could not assuredly offer her refuge or vindication and would, indeed, further her sense of exposure.

One other opportunity for refuge which Clarissa declines is a renewed marriage proposal from Alexander Wyerley, who had been among her suitors before Solmes and Lovelace entered the scene. When she refused him then, she declared a preference for the single life. In refusing him several days before her death, she reiterates

the preference and says that she expects to die soon anyway, at which time she will have "got above all human dependence" (IV, LXXVII, 201-205).

On the other hand, Clarissa does seek refuge in other ways, even though she will not claim her estate, marry Lovelace or Weyerley, or prosecute. She agrees to go to Pennsylvania if she does not die soon (IV, LXIX, 1980). She tries to run away from Lovelace. The Captain Tomlinson scheme has her elated, until she learns that he is another of Lovelace's impostors, and not an agent to reconcile her to her family, thus returning her to her original refuge (II, CXVIII, 464-465). She works to find or create a refuge, even by trying to bribe Dorcas (III, XLI, 243), by refusing to leave her room at the Smiths, and, indeed, frequently remaining voluntarily confined to her apartment at each of the locations in which she finds herself. Later, she voluntarily consigns herself to her coffin and death, seeing both as representative of indestructible refuge, places where Lovelace and all who would impose their wills to evil upon her cannot intrude. This is the closest she can come to the safety of the nunnery for which she longs early on in her tribulations (I, XII, 62).

Moreover, Clarissa eagerly encourages Anna's scheme to secure her protection through the smuggler, Mrs. Townsend, at Deptford (II, XCVII, 346-347). Clarissa

begs in agitation, that Anna "perfect for me . . . your kind scheme with Mrs. Townsend; and I will then leave this man" (II, CI, 378). But before opportunity is provided, she is always put off. Very shortly after entertaining hopes of escape with the help of Mrs. Townsend, perhaps even on one of the ships owned by one of the good lady's brothers, the spurious Captain Tomlinson appears to offer hopes that she can be reconciled with her family and go home (II, CXV, 442).

In seeking autonomy, Clarissa cannot really be said to be indulging her pride any more than she is exhibiting prudery in resisting the intrigues of the merciless Lovelace. She displays no need to assert her will or resist the privilege of those in authority unless they urge her to proceed in a way that seems unreasonable or imprudent. She wants guidance. She is, as we have noted, "strangely perplexed." Lovelace may well aver to Belford "that in being well decieved consists the whole of human happiness . . ." (II, CXIX, 468); however, Clarissa fails to derive any pleasure from being deceived. She is often taken in, and she always resents it. She wants the world to be honest, to present itself as a "reality"--but the world is never real to her but always in disguise. Eventually, she perceives, or at least suspects, what is amiss in dealing with her relations, in coping with Lovelace and his plays, and in evaluating her options. Clarissa's only

complaint is, as she once articulates it to Mrs. Moore at Hampstead, "I know not what to do!" (III, VII, 69). She feels out of control, "driven to and fro, like a feather in the wind . . ." (I, LXXX, 414). And yet, she will be held responsible. Consequently, she must somehow gain control so that she can direct her social and spiritual fate.

At first it seems contradictory that, on the one hand, Clarissa demands autonomy, while on the other, she complains that she is deserted by all. And again, she refuses several opportunities for refuge, while she actively seeks refuge from various quarters. In fact, Clarissa wants only to achieve a position from which meaning can be imposed, from which the available options are reasonable and provide her with the confines of what she perceives to be appropriate social and moral restrictions. Only then will Clarissa feel assured that she is safe and, therefore, right, which to her means uncensurable in this life or in the next.

Granted, Clarissa's predicament is extreme, but in some measure she is in just that position for Richardson and the reader that reflects quite dramatically the perplexity which is the chief characteristic of the novel's world. No one in Richardson's fictional world is sure what the parameters of responsibility and authority are, precisely because in the eighteenth century, previously

accepted parameters were being overturned. Consequently, one reason Clarissa cannot find refuge or guidance is that no one in her world really knows what she should do in her complex situation. Like Clarissa, others seem unable to do more than identify what might seem right, given a set of circumstances that change with every decision. Clarissa voices a common desire in wishing to be "as easy and free here as I used to be . . ." (I, VI, 25). Thus, when she says, "How have I deserved this?" (I, VIII, 35), she is not really asking in some self-pitying way, "Why me?" She is expressing confusion about what went wrong. She conformed to the acknowledged social and spiritual values, but the result was skewed. She should have continued to be "free and easy," but, instead, feeling frightened and insecure, she writes to Anna, "They will make me desperate" (I, LXII, 314).

When others try to advise Clarissa, they typically contradict themselves, not because they are necessarily befuddled, but because decisions are based on conditions (not absolutes), and conditions are the transitory and changing events of this world of accident and mischance. And so Anna tells Clarissa to act, flee to London (I, LXXXI, 415). Then again Anna tells Clarissa to marry Lovelace quickly (I, XCIII, 473). At various times, Anna says Clarissa should end the harrassment by taking possession of her estate. Mrs. Howe insists that Clarissa

marry Lovelace (III, CXIV, 478), advice supported by Anna's opinion (III, CXXX, 516) and Mrs. Norton's (IV, XIII, 49). At another time, Mrs. Howe and Anna tell Clarissa that she owes it to other innocent women to bring Lovelace to trial. If Clarissa will prosecute, Mrs. Howe even offers to help the girl be reconciled with her family. To bolster their argument, Anna explains the custom on the Isle of Man when a man is convicted of rape. By selecting the rope, the sword or the ring offered to her, the violated woman decides whether to have the culprit hanged, beheaded, or married. Anna goes on to recommend one of the first two options (III, LXXXIX, 379). The argument in favor of prosecution is given even greater weight when echoed by Dr. Lewen, the reputable but ineffectual representative of the Church in the novel. He urges her to do justice to herself and all women by giving public testimony against Lovelace (IV, LXVI, 181).

At any rate, Anna sums up the general sense of helplessness that all those interested in Clarissa's welfare--Anna, Hickman, Belford, Mrs. Norton, Dr. Lewen, Mr. Goddard, her physician, all of her allies--seem to express when they try to advise her:

You will be more than woman if you can extricate yourself with honor, having such violent spirits and sordid minds in some, and such tyrannical and despotic wills in others, to deal with.
(I, XV, 66-67)

Indeed, no one can tell Clarissa what to do, but all agree that her honor hangs in the balance. Very close to the time of the rape, despite Clarissa's accounts of Lovelace's villainies, Anna urges Clarissa to placate Lovelace,

to receive his addresses as those of a betrothed lover. You will incur the censure of prudery and affectation, if you keep him at that distance which you have hitherto kept him at.
(III, XI, 97)

Lovelace, in fact, understands very well that, were it possible for Clarissa to achieve the autonomy she desires, she could enjoy the peace and ease that prevailed in her childhood. However, as Lovelace writes to Belford, Clarissa never was independent, for "mutual obligation is the very essence and soul of the social and commercial life" (III, III, 24). Certainly, in Clarissa's world, the overriding responsibility is to meet one's social and moral obligations. What we see in Clarissa is a character trying to fulfill this role, but in an ever-changing situation, divorced from her stable social context. Without the substance and interaction of this stability, she seems unable to make or evoke the appropriate responses. Yet, as we have noted, she genuinely expects to be held accountable by God and society for her choices. Even Lovelace asserts that Clarissa's "misfortune is that she must live in tumults; yet neither raise them herself, nor be able to control them" (III, XIV, 106).

Her isolation is an insurmountable handicap. As Belford tells Lovelace, Clarissa's distress is that she has no one to turn to. Quoting Clarissa, Belford writes to Lovelace that religion teaches that "God will judge us, in a great measure, by our benevolent or evil actions to one another." To this statement, Belford adds, "And is this amiable doctrine the sum of religion? Upon my faith, I believe it is" (III, LXV, 314). Most difficult of all is to be rendered unable to interact at all. Clarissa is disposed to benevolent actions and could overcome her adversity, at least before the rape, with access to any kind of aid, human or providential. But, aware of no support, Clarissa asks, "Why must I be thus pursued and haunted? . . . Despoiled of all succour and help, and of every friend . . ." (III, V, 44).

Of course, Clarissa turns to God, asking for support, direction, and deliverance.

Good Heavens . . . what is at last to
be my destiny! Deliver me from this
dangerous man; and direct me! I know
not what I do; what I can do; nor what
I ought to do! (III, VII, 74)

And, indeed, Clarissa says to Lovelace, "Let Providence decide for me as it pleases" (II, CXXVIII, 512). Nevertheless, she clearly does not think providence will, or that the necessary decisions are anyone's responsibility but her own, not even God's.

Actually, a look at Clarissa's references to providence suggests that she is not sure what God's role is. While it would have seemed inappropriate to Richardson and to his heroine to admit that he or she fails to comprehend what one's relationship to God should be, the evidence in the novel suggests that this is part of the problem. Arrival at this tenuous state of alliance to which we have referred is apparent in Clarissa's balancing between assuming responsibility for her situation and for deliverance from it and perceiving herself as a humble instrument of God's plan. Thus, she admits to her sister, Arabella, that she must have been proud; "My fall had not else been permitted" (III, XXXIII, 206-207). At other times, rather than assume that she has precipitated the trouble, she goes to the opposite extreme and accuses providence, as when she refers to "the all-gracious Inflictor" (II, CI, 378).

In any case, while she calls on God, she clearly feels as deserted by Him as by people. Clarissa longs to be as "I was in the days of my childhood--when the Almighty was yet with me, when I was in my father's house" (III, CXXXI, 518). She feels separated from her social milieu. Without one, she is automatically without the other. Her quest for refuge is as much a quest to return to contact with providence or to be rid of the separating factor--Lovelace--so that she can ascertain how to

restore a sense of community with providence. The responsibility is hers to find God, she believes, not God's to find her. So she remains in suspension "till Providence shall be pleased to put me into some way to help myself." Until then, "whom have I to protect me from" Lovelace (III, II, 16)?

Still, Clarissa hesitates to give up on God's care utterly. Rather, she believes it to be withheld until she once more fulfills her obligations. We recall Lovelace's comment that "mutual obligation is the very essence and soul of the social and commercial life." So, too, mutual obligation is, for Clarissa, the essence of one's relationship with God. This proposition explains Clarissa's admission to Lovelace when she finally escapes his clutches.

Ever since I knew you . . . I have
been in a wilderness of doubt and
error. I bless God that I am out of
your hands. I will transact for
myself what relates to myself. . . .
Am I not my own mistress! (III, V, 47)

God's responsibility to her was suspended while Clarissa was out of her social context. Consequently, she felt bereft, literally and actively deserted, not just forgotten, when she permitted this to happen. Yet, perhaps there is a bit of mercy. Clarissa expresses hope even to Lovelace:

But God, who knows my innocence and
my upright intentions, will not wholly
abandon me when I am out of your

power; but while in it, I cannot expect a gleam of the Divine grace or favour to reach me. (III, VII, 73)

Innocence and good intentions are insufficient. One's relationship with God, in Clarissa's world, is not only out of balance, but, as it were, set aside if it is not predicated upon and circumscribed by one's social context.

Clarissa never really thinks that mortification of her pride is the point, regardless of providentialist arguments that the need for mortification is what she perceives just prior to death. If it were the point, she refuses the lesson anyway, as we discover from a letter to Anna.

My pride . . . is not sufficiently mortified, if it be necessary for me to submit to make that man my choice. . . . Do you think your Clarissa Harlowe so lost, so sunk, at least, as that she could, for the sake of patching up, in the world's eye, a broken reputation, meanly appear indebted to the generosity, or perhaps compassion, of a man who has . . . robbed her of it? (III, CXXXI, 519)

By and large, Clarissa tends to dismiss the notion that God permitted her dilemma or really has anything to do with the situation in any direct way. Basically, she sees it as her problem and does not enjoy support temporally or spiritually. She tells Anna that

all the aid I can draw from religious duties is hardly sufficient to support my staggering reason. I am a very young creature . . . to be left to my own conduct in such circumstances as I am in. (IV, VII, 27)

It is important to note that Clarissa says this near the end, in a letter dated July 27. She still feels deserted, bereft. We still have a vision of a young woman trying to discover how to translate that nebulous, tentative alliance between God's power, authority, control, and man's responsibility for directing himself. Granted that she also, even closer to her death, declares, in that favorite phrase of the providentialists, that God would let her depend only on Himself. However, this statement is preceded by a sigh of relief that the suffering is over. Coupled with this is a reiteration of the degree of desertion she has felt to find herself without any sense of succour due to God's presence or to an assurance that He has reserved her for Himself. Now she will be safe and will no longer risk failing in her own responsibility. Furthermore, in death there is no possibility that one will be separated from his moral context because he has been separated from his social context. In the final state, the contexts finally, truly do merge, as Clarissa has needed them to merge in life. Very weak, Clarissa speaks to those friends huddled around her bed, asking that they not mourn for her and explaining why death is attractive to her.

To be so much exposed to temptation,
and to be so liable to fail in the
trial, who would not rejoice that all
her dangers are over! All I wished was
pardon and blessing from my dear parents.
Easy as my departure seems to promise

to be, it would have been still easier
had I had that pleasure. BUT GOD
ALMIGHTY WOULD NOT LET ME DEPEND FOR
COMFORT UPON ANY BUT HIMSELF. (IV,
CXIV, 339)

Desperation, confusion, and finally weariness drive Clarissa to embrace death not as a reward but as a state in which existence is once more free and easy and predictable. In death, she will no longer have to maintain a never easy, never wholly satisfactory balance between her own will and God's, between her authority and God's authority. She will in death no longer be caught between self-assessment and social reputation, with no appropriate recourse to effect a deliverance, but accountable nonetheless. In death, Clarissa will not be forced to portray herself as "sunk in my fortunes; my character forfeited; my honour lost . . . destitute of friends, and even of hope . . ." lamenting sadly, "how to defend myself in everything that has happened, I cannot tell . . ." (III, LXXXIII, 350-351).

In any practical sense, Clarissa certainly attributes more power and responsibility to men and to herself than she does to God, and finds small comfort in having to leave jurisdiction to God. Access to God without social forces to add strength to His presence is of questionable value. So Clarissa cries, "I have no guardian now. . . . Nothing but God and my own vigilance to depend upon!" (II, LXXXVIII, 313). At times, God even seems powerless

to Clarissa. She is puzzled that though there is a just God, whom Lovelace taunts with his wickedness, Lovelace yet lives to "imprecate and deceive" (III, XXXV, 223).

Richardson offers us what he believes to be the reward of severely tried but always diligent goodness. However, since Clarissa and Richardson's readers see God working effectively only within social contexts, they prefer to see rewards within social contexts as well. Comfortable only within the temporal realm, Richardson's heroine and readers embrace Judeo-Christian doctrine as part of that realm but long for more explicable than mysterious solutions. Once miracles are no longer expected, reasonable solutions are those which honor the notions of goodness, rightness, fairness. The best solutions to problems or intrusions of evil are those that validate the social order designed to replace a dependence on God with a dependence on man, as providence oversees not just man's struggles to impose order on his world but his manifold achievements as well.

Notes

¹Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 129-130.

²Ian P. Watt, The Rise of the English Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960), p. 216. Watt argues that

combining the sense of waste and defeat with the fortitude Clarissa displays in facing death creates a tragic balance between horror and grandeur, revealing "an imaginative quality of a much higher order than the jejune eschatology of Richardson's critical defence in the Postscript would suggest."

³Postscript, IV, 554.

⁴A.D. McKillop echoes Poe and Stevenson in his study of Clarissa. "Though each of the chief characters in Clarissa moves toward a fixed end only through an intricate series of wavering moods and policies, the end is in a sense present from the beginning." Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1936; rpt. New York: The Shoe String Press, 1960), p. 121.

⁵Aristotle, Poetics, trans. S.H. Butcher, in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt, 1971), p. 52.

⁶Christopher Hill, "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times," in Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 102-111.

⁷David Abraham, "Clarissa and Tess: Two Meanings of Death," Massachusetts Studies in English, 1 (1968), 96 and 98. Abraham sees Clarissa's death as "the anti-thesis of tragedy; it is a consummation of Christian ethics. The fact that her suppressed sexuality and death may very well be construed by post-Freudian readers . . . as tragic, seems to be essentially alien to the Christian matrix into which the novel is cast," p. 97.

⁸Frederick R. Karl, The Adversary Literature--The English Novel in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Genre (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), p. 144.

⁹John Preston, The Created Self (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), p. 89. Preston argues that Clarissa "has to resist the whole drift and design of the book," which is to create the sense of alienation. This is achieved by the "compulsive verbalizing which keeps people apart," pp. 87, 92-93.

¹⁰Erich Kahler, The Inward Turn of Narrative, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston, 3 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), 165.

¹¹Karl, p. 136.

¹²Abraham, pp. 96 and 98.

¹³Margaret Anne Doody, A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 176. Doody studies the tradition of meditating upon one's own death and imagining it with the senses in an effort to increase self-knowledge and love for God. She concludes that Clarissa "is probably the last major example in English literature of this kind of contemplation of death." Since her activity fits into an important tradition among Christian writers, Doody argues that Clarissa is not just being morbid.

¹⁴Doody, p. 171.

¹⁵Elizabeth Bergen Brophy, Samuel Richardson: The Triumph of Craft (Knoxville, Tn.: The Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1974), pp. 105-106. According to Brophy, pride in her own integrity sustains Clarissa until she realizes that she is the one who has acted out of character. Hereafter, she languishes and dies.

¹⁶Rachel Mayer Brownstein, "'An Exemplar to Her Sex': Richardson's Clarissa," Yale Review, 67 (1977), 47. We should not, according to Brownstein, read the account of Clarissa's death as evidence of necrophilia on her part or on Richardson's part because "death promises Clarissa no orgiastic ecstasy." Instead, dying is for her "a taxing struggle of mind and body."

¹⁷Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 267-271.

¹⁸Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century Fiction," PMLA, 91 (1976), 241.

¹⁹This is not to over-simplify the tenets of either world view. Christian doctrine does require a certain amount of effort and decision making but stresses far more than does the secular world view the concepts of submissiveness and obedience. Fictions set in the Christian framework more frequently focus on the value of passive acquiescence to circumstances with the attendant acknowledgement that the individual is helpless to extricate himself or would be usurping God's prerogative by trying to do so. Secular tenets, on the other hand, tend to insist that the individual take appropriate action to realize goals he has set and decisions he has made.

Submissiveness tends to come into play usually when the individual is expected to assume the role of chattel. Submission would be expected of a woman of marriageable age since negotiating the best marriage for her would enhance family status or wealth much as selling off or acquiring other property would do.

²⁰Norman Sykes, Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1934; rpt. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1962), p. 283.

²¹C.J. Stranks, Anglican Devotion: Studies in the Spiritual Life of the Church of England between the Reformation and the Oxford Movement (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1961), p. 125.

²²The Whole Duty of Man, Laid Down in a Plain and Familiar Way for the Use of All, but Especially the Meanest Reader (Printed by R. Norton for Robert Paulett, 1677), pp. 2-3, 5. C.J. Stranks suggests that the most likely author of The Whole Duty of Man is Dr. Allestree, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. Stranks' designation seems to be fairly commonly accepted as the author. Stranks, Anglican Devotion, p. 125.

²³Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham, "Upon the Social Nature of Man," in Sermons by Joseph Butler, ed. W.E. Gladstone (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 35 and 44.

²⁴Doody, p. 179.

²⁵Doody, pp. 155, 169, 175.

²⁶Mary Poovey, "Journeys from This World to the Next: The Providential Promise in Clarissa and Tom Jones," English Literary History, 43 (1976), p. 300.

²⁷Kermode, The Sense of an Ending, p. 30.

²⁸New, p. 240.

²⁹Martin C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1959), p. 37.

³⁰Cynthia Griffin Wolff, Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), p. 165. According to Wolff, Richardson's greatest achievement is in his fidelity to his character. "His refusal . . . to transform his

heroine by some feat of specious dexterity into a well-adjusted female Grandison, who lived to tell the tale of her trials to a host of happy grandchildren reveals a comprehension of her nature which one might expect of the artist who could create her. There clearly is no place in his world for Clarissa; to claim one for her would be a violation of her nature more deadly than any with which she has been threatened in the novel."

³¹McKillop, p. 127.

³²Lois A. Sklepowich, "Providential Labyrinth: The Development of Richardson's Christian Comedy," Diss. Univ. of Virginia, 1973, p. 284.

³³Sklepowich, p. 277.

³⁴Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory (London: NLB, 1976), p. 135.

CHAPTER V
UNWORKABLE BUT IRREPLACEABLE: A STORY
WITH NO END

In his essay on "The Philosophy of Composition," Edgar Allen Poe reflects Richardson's attitude when he claims to have had in mind the end of a work before he began the writing process.

I first established in mind the climax,
or concluding query. . . . Here then
the poem may be said to have its
beginning--at the end, where all works
of art should begin.¹

The advantage of such an approach is that continuity is maintained throughout as the author focuses on his pre-determined destinations. Indeed, Richardson would probably agree with Lois Sklepowich that the end of Clarissa "is the explanation of its beginning,"² though I doubt that he would accept her reading. Imperative to Richardson was a sense, if not of the inexorableness of Hardy's fate, at least of an indisputable causal relationship originating prior to the immediate action of the novel. Recognition that the end of Clarissa is the natural consequence of all that came before in the heroine's fictional world comes from the perceptive analysis of Richardson by Thomas Hardy, especially in

his comments concerning Richardson's structural superiority and the interactions of his characters, especially in Clarissa. Even though Hardy complains that Richardson's characters are often "cold" and "artificial" and that there is a good bit of "unreality" in some of Richardson's scenes, he asserts that Richardson shows great skill "in evolving a graceful, well-balanced set of conjectures, forming altogether one of those circumstantial wholes. . . ."3

Most readers have agreed that whatever their difficulties may be in deciding what to think of Clarissa and her death, or of Lovelace, Richardson steadfastly maintained the continuity of his narrative, guiding Clarissa's course to the death that he thought essential. Nevertheless, despite the unity and coherence of his story, Richardson arrived at the designated conclusion amid objections, only to encounter in his readers continued and fervent straining away from the fact and the implications of Clarissa's death. No other element in his long work, including the length itself really, has been so continuously rejected. Only Clarissa's death remains unacceptable for almost all readers, past and present.

But not only is the unacceptability of Clarissa's death an issue of Richardson's accomplishment; it is indeed the key to any interpretation of Richardson's great work. Clarissa's end reveals both her unconsciously tentative attempts--and her author's as well--to

accommodate the not wholly compatible aspects of the middle-class eighteenth-century world view. In their view, or better, the view they would like to maintain, man has control over, and therefore responsibility for, the direction of his life, but in no way does this conflict with providential thinking. Even from the pulpit, as we have noted, the worshipper's mind is guided repeatedly to the subject of life on this earth and his charge is to cherish and improve it for himself and for others in his immediate world and, as a result, for the society in general; and yet this is not supposed to conflict with the other-world spirituality of traditional Christianity.

Furthermore, as Christopher Hill has so carefully elaborated in "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times," the demise of the feudal system, the rise of the mercantile class and economic reforms, particularly relating to the tax laws, brought pressure on the individual to consider the needs, largely economic, of his family, his socio-economic class, and the shifting social climate of eighteenth-century England. The individual was called to better family and society. In recompense, he could hope to improve his own lot. As Hill points out,

In contradistinction to this theme of morality shaped by society, Richardson introduces the counterpoint of "free" individuals shaping their own morality. . . . Clarissa was one of the "free";

yet by divine grace she managed, even
in the totally isolated state in which
she found herself, to be virtuous. . . .⁴

Thus, social discourse and received wisdom taught that the individual is free to choose virtue, and therefore is obligated to benefit the temporal welfare and prospects of the family and socio-economic class. And Richardson clearly accepted the notion. Unfortunately, the events of the reality the author chooses to portray seem to negate any accomplishment of moral success. Unwittingly, this is part of Richardson's lesson. As Hill puts it,

this "freedom" is an illusion, as Richardson involuntarily shows. The individual cannot escape from his society. . . . Clarissa . . . separated herself from her family. Though she won a greater freedom of moral choice by her isolation, yet nevertheless this did not save her from finally being cut off from all possibility of living in her society. Freedom in each case turned out to be merely ignorance of necessity. Therefore Richardson was reduced, in defending the only conscious positive morality he depicts, to call in the next world to redress the balance of this.⁵

Richardson wanted to affirm the authority of contemporary Christian doctrine with its claim that providence would direct, oversee, and reward the virtuous and punish the wicked. He also wanted to affirm the obligation of the individual to choose virtue, defined as a commitment to social good. Ideally, the two aims should be compatible. Richardson believed they must be and strove to

make them so. For peace of mind and for the integrity of his fiction, Richardson needed to believe that Clarissa's death affirmed his premises, and, conversely, that the premises on which his fiction was founded led logically to and affirmed the necessity and validity of her death.

In Closure in the Novel, Marianna Torgovnick says that "closure"

designates the process by which a novel reaches an adequate and appropriate conclusion or, at least, what the author hopes or believes is an adequate, appropriate conclusion.⁶

When readers reject the conclusion, they should have in mind a more appropriate resolution to the major concern of the work. But no really satisfactory alternatives have been suggested for Clarissa. Almost universally, the idea of marriage between Clarissa and a reformed Lovelace or between Clarissa and any other suitor, like the Mr. Wyerley Richardson offers, is found to be as unsatisfying as her death is. Nor would most readers like it if she lived on at the Dairy as a compromised but honored spinster. Arnold Kettle suggests that

tragedy occurs when a situation arises which men, at the particular point in development that they have reached, are unable to solve.⁷

If Kettle is correct, Richardson has written a tragedy. No available solution would be any more acceptable and, as we noted earlier, Richardson has Clarissa carefully

explain why she cannot choose any end other than death. Indeed, George Eliot tried a century later to offer a similar "willingly ardent" heroine, Dorothea of Middlemarch, a more secular solution to a somewhat similar situation. That humanist resolution is almost as jarring as Clarissa's death.

It seems then that the point of the novel, whether Richardson knew it or not, is the author's sense that there ought to be a satisfying resolution to Clarissa's situation. He knew that Pamela's marriage was a problem philosophically and aesthetically, and perhaps, morally as well. Richardson convinced himself, therefore, that Clarissa's death was necessary. His fictional structure is tight enough for us to admit that he leads without digression to her death. Nevertheless, what we really are seeing in Clarissa is the author's gropings to accommodate two widely divergent world views, both of which are in flux, while denying that they are divergent, changing, or incompatible. Certainly, he does not wish to suggest that they could offer mutually exclusive solutions to Clarissa's problem or that they could leave her in unresolvable isolation.

Clarissa has its foundations in Christianity to be sure, but among its favored tenets is the typically secularized doctrine, deriving from Paul's admonishment in his letter to Titus, that man's duty is to live a

self-controlled, upright life in this world. This life is no longer just a passage to the gates of heaven or hell, but an end in itself. Thus, men must focus on opportunities for good deeds. Edward Copeland has argued that we do not believe Clarissa's death scene because it "does not, and cannot, represent what it purports to, heaven."⁸ There is no sense of heaven, just a sense of waste. Eaves and Kimpel note that even though rewards in heaven are mentioned frequently, toward the end of the novel, it is difficult to look at events through Clarissa's perspective and believe that her overriding motive for virtue is to secure a heavenly reward.⁹ Nor is she in a hurry to be with God. She wants peace and relief from isolation. Ultimately, only death ensures peace and protection.

Clarissa must die because the novel is her attempt to balance essentially divergent states--as the product of her own will and as God's creature under his direct guidance. She strives for control but is in a situation that denies success. She strives to turn herself over to God, but feels outside His direction as long as she is outside her own direction. Richardson never sees a way to let her back into possession of the benefits of either boon, her own authority or God's.

William Park says that as a Christian tragedy, Clarissa's martyrdom fulfills her life.¹⁰ However, in

order for martyrdom to be acceptable to the reader, such a solution must be among those validated by the fictional world view at least and by the reader's world view as well at best. Clarissa, however, is written in a secular setting in a secular age. Thus, it demands a secularly acceptable resolution. In an accurate observation in a generally flawed reading of Clarissa, Erich Kahler pinpoints the dilemma.

Calvinism shifted from teaching that men's duty is to serve God by remaining in whatever position God places him, to the more active attitude that not men's calling but his talents are God-given, his capacity for making rational choices and engaging in undertakings. Success was the proof of God's grace.¹¹

The question for Clarissa which Richardson answers only with her death is, as Cynthia Wolff puts it, "How does the essentially moral individual express himself and his own goodness in this world?"¹² By offering no answer, Richardson reveals his struggle with the same question and his failure to answer it. As she moves closer to God, Clarissa cries out in despair more and more frequently, "What a world is this! What is there in it desirable? The good we hope for, so strangely mixed, that one knows not what to wish for!" (I, LII, 265). In revealing Clarissa's despair, Richardson portrays, according to Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "a Christian vision of a kind of hell."¹³

The moment of relief from this hell occurs at the end, as Clarissa's and Richardson's struggles for that uneasy and tentative alliance between man's authority over himself and man's submission to God's supremacy comes to its paradoxical and unsatisfying, problematic conclusion. Clarissa is the representation of secular and spiritual man attempting to forge a new union. As Cynthia Wolff says,

Richardson has started with what is an essentially sociological quandary--economic and societal changes have taken place which make a certain kind of personality and certain expressions of virtue no longer possible--and given it a purely religious answer. [Clarissa's new identity] is incomplete insofar as it does not in any genuine sense replace the earthly identity she has been denied.¹⁴

I would have to disagree only with Wolff's last statement. There is no indication that Clarissa is trying to replace her secular self with a spiritual self, even as she embraces death. In fact, the point is that all she ever wants is to merge the two, to ascertain how to accommodate the needs of both. Her effort--perhaps her futile effort--to do so is the crux of Richardson's novel.

Our problem as readers is the one Wolff identifies. How should we judge Clarissa's actions? Does she achieve the highest possible moral state or would it have been even higher if she could have found a state in which to express her goodness while remaining alive?¹⁵ Traditionally readers have insisted that the answer to this

last question is yes. That we have never been able to offer a better solution than death, however, suggests that Richardson has articulated a dilemma which still exists for us. Secular and spiritual man are still circling one another, unable totally to abandon the one view or totally to embrace the other. Richardson's greatest talent was to anticipate so brilliantly the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' "crisis of belief"--that crisis which had emerged after all the celebrations of secular man have seemingly died of their own emptiness.

Lois Sklepowich argues that "if it is Lovelace's design to ravish Clarissa, it is God's design . . . to execute Providential justice."¹⁶ Even though Clarissa believes that God deserts her and that by failing in her mission adequately to direct her own life, she has made God desert her, there is no sense that the reader perceives of providential justice manipulating Clarissa, Lovelace, or any of the occurrences in the book. We cannot see the novel as Jobean, either, even though Sklepowich does.¹⁷ We never have the feeling that God is allowing Clarissa to suffer to test her. He has not stricken a bargain with Satan, using Clarissa as the pawn. Unlike Job's story, God is not a really present character in Richardson's novel.

On the other hand, Clarissa does an intricate *pas de deux* with God, just as she does with Lovelace. For she

cannot ascertain how to accommodate God's will without betraying her own or failing in her social and moral obligations. The dilemma had developed by the eighteenth century. Richardson defines, articulates, and examines it for us. His failure to resolve it just indicates that no resolution existed for him. And perhaps that is expecting too much anyway. In Clarissa, Richardson was just discovering the problem. If we look at it like this, we must agree with A.D. McKillop's assessment of what goes on in Clarissa:

The story proceeds on several different levels: there are the unavowed or incompletely avowed feelings and impulses of Lovelace and Clarissa; there are the intentions and policies which they proclaim and explain in their letters; there are the comments of other characters upon the protagonists, which sometimes clear and sometimes obscure the situation; and beyond all this there is the question how far the novelist himself controls these impulses and motives for his own ends, and how far he should do so. There can be no doubt that in the long run Richardson kept control, but in the course of his work he had the feeling that his characters were pulling on the leash. . . .¹⁸

In discussing closure, Frank Kermode asserts that the novel "lends itself to explanations borrowed from any intellectual system of the universe which seems at the time satisfactory."¹⁹ The novel also lends itself to vivid reflection of the philosophical dilemmas of the author and of his age, whether or not he realizes that

he is undercutting perhaps even his most cherished suppositions. Richardson did not fully comprehend his accomplishment. And surely, he would be dismayed to think that, despite his unprecedented attempts to close his novel, guiding and limiting reader interpretation severely, he is accused of undercutting his avowed purpose for creating the story. Nevertheless, try as he might, Richardson could not conceal his unadmitted ambivalence within his Christian framework, because he was involved with the ambivalence of his society toward Christian doctrine and toward traditional social constructs.

Richardson's achievement in Clarissa and the reason for the position of importance held by this novel is that Richardson carried on a literary tradition by building on it. He moved beyond what had before been articulated to hold for our examination, as if under a microscope, a moment when man attempts to redefine and perceive the ramifications of existence in seemingly incompatible roles as his own creator and as God's vassal. That he could not reconcile these roles, that his particular closure fails, is no more than a reflection of our own continuing failure to reconcile the contrarities we perceive, to close (or reclose) our world, after the great intellectual upheavals of the eighteenth century. When the time comes that we make the reconciliation, that we

succeed in developing a new closed system, Clarissa will no longer speak to us as it does. One tends to believe that we will rue such a new day.

Notes

¹Edgar Allen Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," in The American Tradition in Literature, ed. Bradley, Beatty, Long, 1 (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967), 893.

²Lois A. Sklepowich, "Providential Labyrinth: The Development of Richardson's Christian Comedy," Diss. Univ. of Virginia, 1973, p. 259.

³Thomas Hardy, "The Profitable Reading of Fiction," in Life and Art, ed. Ernest Brennecke, Jr. (1925; rpt. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 70. First appeared in The Forum (New York) in March of 1888.

⁴Christopher Hill, "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times," in Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 112.

⁵Hill, p. 113.

⁶Marianna Torgovnick, Closure in the Novel (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), p. 6.

⁷Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel: Defoe to the Present, revised ed., 2 vols. in 1 (New York: Harper & Row, Perennial Library, 1968), 1, 70.

⁸Edward W. Copeland, "Clarissa and Fanny Hill: Sisters in Distress," Studies in the Novel, 4 (Fall 1972), 349.

⁹T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 278.

¹⁰William Park, "Clarissa as Tragedy," Studies in English Literature, 16 (1976), 463.

¹¹Erich Kahler, The Inward Turn of Narrative, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 95-96.

¹²Cynthia Griffin Wolff, Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, The Shoe String Press, 1972), pp. 168-169.

¹³Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), p. 137.

¹⁴Wolff, p. 168.

¹⁵Wolff, p. 168.

¹⁶Sklepowich, p. 277.

¹⁷Sklepowich, p. 39.

¹⁸Alan Dugald McKillop, Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1936; rpt. New York: The Shoe String Press, 1960), p. 122.

¹⁹Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 128.

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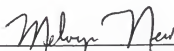
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

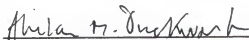
Janet Morgan Fisher was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1947. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in 1969 from Middle Tennessee State University. In 1972, she completed the Master of Arts degree at the same university. She continued graduate studies at George Peabody College and in the doctoral program at Vanderbilt University. Concurrently, she was on the faculty of the Department of English at Tennessee State University. Following a move to Gainesville, she completed her doctoral studies at the University of Florida.

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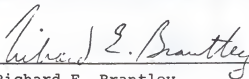
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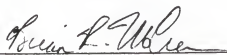
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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